

FAMILIAL INFLUENCES ON THE MORAL REASONING
OF ADOLESCENT FIRST-TIME OFFENDERS

By

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This study examined the influence of three familial variables and three demographic variables on the level of moral reasoning of adolescent first-time offenders. More specifically, this research sought to determine the degree of relationship between the first-time offending adolescent's level of moral reasoning and the following familial variables: (a) the level of moral reasoning demonstrated by her/his parents, (b) the reported parenting style utilized by her/his parents, and (c) the reported level of family functioning. Similarly, the extent of the relationship was examined between the adolescent's level of moral reasoning and the following demographic characteristics: (a) adolescent's age, (b) adolescent's gender, and (c) the family's socio-economic status. In addition, this study assessed the combined strength of these variables in predicting the level of moral reasoning of these adolescents. It was hoped that this research might result in the identification of salient characteristics differentiating first-time adolescent offenders eligible to participate in adolescent crime prevention and diversion programs.

The study sample consisted of 103 adolescents and their families drawn from 14 counties within the state of Florida and from a variety of different locales. All of the families had adolescents involved in Florida's juvenile justice system as first-time offenders. Each of the adolescents completed the Defining Issues Test, the Beaver's Self-Report Family Inventory, and the Parental Authority Questionnaire. Parents completed the Defining Issues Test and a demographic questionnaire.

A regression analysis was used to evaluate the contributions of the six variables in predicting the adolescent's level of moral reasoning as measured by the Defining Issues Test (DIT). Although this sample of first-time offending adolescents demonstrated a significantly lower level of moral reasoning as compared with adolescents of the same age in the general norm group, there were no significant associations found between the adolescents' moral reasoning level and the six variables. There were, however, statistically significant associations between mothers' and fathers' authoritative parenting style and the level of family health reported. Discussion of these results, the study's limitations, and suggestions for future research were then presented.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Criminal acts committed by juveniles are increasing in frequency. The United States Department of Justice (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999) reports that our nation's juvenile courts processed nearly 1.8 million acts of delinquency in 1996. This represents a 3% increase in the number of cases processed in 1996 as compared to 1995 and a 49% increase from those processed in 1987. Controlling for changes in the size of the juvenile population, between 1987 and 1996 the total delinquency case rate per 1,000 juveniles increased 34%, from 46.2 to 61.8 cases per 1,000 juveniles. Particularly alarming, the case rate for delinquent acts committed against another person increased by 80% during this time period.

This growth in the number of delinquent acts has resulted in the courts increasingly relying on independent alternative sentencing/intervention (diversion) programs to conserve court resources for the most serious cases. A plethora of diversion programs have now been developed and implemented to meet this need. As a consequence, the overwhelming majority of first-time offending juveniles (67.5% in Florida) participate in diversion programs in lieu of traditional juvenile court (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 1998; Fox, Minor, & Pelkey, 1994).

These programs, despite their popularity, are not without their critics. Three significant criticisms have been leveled at diversion programs. First, many critics see the content and design of these programs as inconsistent and capricious (Braithwaite, 1989; Cragg, 1992; Umbreit, 1985). The intervention philosophies range from those that ignore

the delinquent behavior as a normal developmental phase to "tough love" boot camps. Second, the process of assigning juveniles to diversion programs has been judged as too arbitrary. In jurisdictions in which there are different types of diversion programs available (e.g., tutorial-based versus family counseling based programs), it is common for juveniles to be assigned haphazardly to different programs (Howitt & Moore, 1993). Third, the effectiveness of the diversion process has been called into question. Many critics believe that diversion programs have little or no lasting impact in increasing a juvenile offender's prosocial behaviors (Braithwaite, 1999; Braithwaite & Pettit, 1990; Fox, Minor, & Pelkey, 1994; Greenwood, 1996).

These criticisms can be attributed to research gaps found within the field of juvenile justice diversion. Identifying the key predictive factors of delinquency and the development of standardized assessments of those factors seem to be a logical first step toward addressing these gaps. In addition to minimizing the arbitrary or unnecessary placement of juveniles in diversion programs, procedures that might differentiate among juvenile offenders seem a necessary prerequisite for determining program efficacy (Schumacher & Kurz, 1994). As a case in point, slightly more than half of all first-time juvenile offenders never reoffend after participating in an initial intervention administered by the juvenile justice system, and only eight to ten percent of the first-time offenders become habitual offenders (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 1998; Schumacher, 1994). Such basic data suggest that there are significant within-group differences among the general population of first-time juvenile offenders. Yet, in the absence of an agreement about key factors differentiating first-time offending juveniles and a reliable means of assessment of those factors, researchers face imposing problems when attempting to measure intervention outcome (Gable & Brown, 1978; Williams,

1999; Wolber & Banze, 1998). For example, when outcome is measured only by gross standards such as recidivism, those diversion programs most selective when screening referrals will be the programs that produce the more impressive outcomes (i.e., lower recidivism rates). However, if outcome is also measured by more mediating variables such as changed levels of moral reasoning or enhanced parenting skills from pretreatment to posttreatment, outcomes are then less influenced by the referral screening process and more likely to measure intervention/treatment effect.

What are the key predictive factors contributing to first-time offenders committing only one act of delinquency versus those who engage in a long-term pattern of delinquency? Numerous theorists contend that both familial and environmental factors influence the development of an adolescent's moral reasoning and subsequent predisposition to delinquency. This study seeks to assess the influence of three familial variables on the moral reasoning development of adolescents who are first-time offenders: (a) parental moral development, (b) parenting style, and (c) level of family functioning.

Scope of the Problem

External Environment and Delinquency

Diverse theories in the fields of criminology and sociology exist to explain juvenile delinquency. For example, the dominant theoretical traditions in the field of criminology include, but are not limited to, labeling theory; social- and self-control theories; social learning and sub-cultural theories; and restorative justice theory. Most of the aforementioned theories that have been empirically studied point to the contribution of the social context and interpersonal factors (family interactions, school relationships, and the influence from peer groups and adults) in shaping the juvenile's prosocial values

and in determining criminal behavior (Braithwaite, 1989, 1999; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2000).

In turn, recent views from mental health professionals promote the need for a multivariate, ecological approach in the understanding, prevention, and intervention of juvenile delinquency. This approach was first modeled by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and acknowledges the diverse explanations for delinquency (Garbarino, 1999; Henggeler, 1991, 1996; Schumacher & Kurz, 1994; Yoshikawa, 1994). Four factors used to predict chronic delinquent behavior that have been extracted from ecological approaches are disrupted families, school failure, drug and alcohol abuse, and peer group delinquent behaviors (Espelage, Bosworth, & Simon, 2000; Henggeler et al., 1998; Schumacher & Kurz, 1994; Zagar, Arvit, Sylvies, & Busch, 1991). These four factors, along with the age of the defendant, constitute the key risk factors assessed in one of the field's most current and popular assessment instrument: the Orange County, California, Probation Department's Chronic Juvenile Offenders Prediction Instrument (CJOPI), authored by Schumacher and Kurz (1994). This assessment instrument is the product of a 7-year longitudinal research study on juvenile crime in Orange County, California. Data were collected on more than 3,000 juvenile offenders who entered the Orange County juvenile justice system for the first time during the first six months of 1985 and 1987 respectively. The cohort was tracked for 6 years to determine the overall volume of offenses committed and to examine differences among those juveniles who either commit just one offense versus those who become low-rate (two or three total offenses) or become chronic (four or more total offenses) reoffenders. An analysis of chronic reoffenders' intake data collected at the time of their first offense was used to create a risk assessment profile that could be applied to future first-time offenders. The analysis showed that those

first-time offenders who ultimately were labeled chronic reoffenders scored affirmative for two or more of the following factors at the time of their first offense (Schumacher & Kurz, 1994): (a) school behavior/performance (i.e., truancy, suspensions, or expulsions, poor grades); (b) significant family problems (i.e., poor supervision, illness, parental substance abuse, marriage discord, financial problems, child abuse or neglect, criminal family members); (c) substance abuse; (d) delinquency factors (i.e., stealing, runaway status, gang association).

At the national level, in 1994-95 the U. S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, developed and implemented the Delinquency Prevention Works program (Hurley, 1995). Theory-based rather than empirical, this program's efforts paralleled the work of Schumacher and Kurz (1994) and reached many of the same conclusions with respect to establishing key risk factors. However, in that the OJJDP program has been geared more toward prevention rather than diversion/intervention, a greater emphasis has been placed on examining community-related risk factors and a lesser emphasis has been placed on juvenile drug and alcohol abuse.

Family Functioning and Delinquency

Family disruption or dysfunction is one of the factors that appear with regularity in the theories concerning the causes of delinquency (Maguire, Morgan, & Reiner, 1997). Based on Kumpfer's (1994) review of studies for OJJDP, family correlates of delinquency are poor socialization practices, poor discipline skills, poor parent/child relationships, excessive family conflict and marital discord, family chaos and stress, poor parental mental health, and family isolation. Hamburg and Takanishi (1998) of the Carnegie Corporation offer an explanation for many of these correlates.

Throughout most of human history, small communities provided durable networks, familiar human relationships, and cultural guidance for youth people, offering support in time of stress and skills necessary for coping and adaptation. In contemporary societies, these social supports have eroded considerably through extensive geographical mobility, scattering of extended families, and the rise of single-parent families, especially those involving very young, very poor, and socially isolated mothers. (p. 825)

Furthermore, most of the salient predictors of delinquency change at different developmental stages and interact in complex ways (Kumpfer, 1994). For example, Paterson and Joerger (1993) assert that juveniles who commit delinquent acts at young ages are more likely to act individually while older juveniles are more influenced by peers. Accordingly, interventions that focus on family functioning, particularly multi-target ecological family therapy approaches that address the family's interactions with social domains (e.g., schools, peer groups, and the community), have consistently proven to be effective at addressing delinquency (Henggeler, Melton, & Smith, 1992; Henggeler et al., 1998; Mann, Borduin, Henggeler, & Blaske, 1990; Nugent, Carpenter, & Parks, 1993).

Borduin et al. (1995) compared the effects of home-based versus office-based, individual, outpatient counseling in the treatment of almost 200 chronic juvenile offenders. An analysis of pre- to posttreatment outcome measures indicated positive changes in the level of family functioning. Recidivism rates were examined 4 years post-treatment. The juveniles of families that received multi-target ecological family therapy were significantly less likely to be rearrested (22%) than juveniles of families that dropped out of multi-target ecological family therapy (47%), received individual counseling (71%), dropped out of individual counseling (71%), or refused to participate in either treatment (88%).

Henggeler (1989) reviewed 65 studies over a 30-year period that addressed the relationship between family transactions and child psycho-social functioning. The author concluded that minimal levels of parental control strategies may be the key source of delinquent behavior. Or, if parental controls are present but are inept or ineffective, juveniles in these families are also at risk for delinquency. Finally, the antisocial behavior of parents, including the acceptable use of deviant methods to meet goals, is a strong predictor of delinquent behavior in young family members.

Family Functioning and the Development of the Children's Moral Reasoning/Prosocial Behavior

Common to all theories of criminology, and congruent with current multivariate, ecological approaches, is the belief that a child's family is the agent primarily responsible for inculcating prosocial values in their children. Further, that while the family members are responsible for socializing the child (Akers, 1994; Einstadter & Henry, 1995) other social contexts, particularly schools, function as reinforcers of the family's efforts and provide formal social controls where the family fails (Einstadter & Henry, 1995).

Zern (1997) reports on data collected over 15 years and measures the extent to which adolescents (ages 12 to 22; $n = 2,863$) believe that young people should receive guidance on moral issues and from whom. The adolescents report that family members have a greater impact than school staff, clergy, peers, or any single individual. Results showed a minimal difference in ratings among genders, age groups, and calendar years. Hart, Atkins, and Ford (1999) recently analyzed the longitudinal data supplied by the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (Child Sample). The sample consisted of over 650 children born to a representative sample of American women who were between the ages of 14 and 21 in 1979. The authors reported that family influences had a direct effect

on the child's moral identity development in adolescence. Further, the authors found that family influence was independent of the effects of personality or socio-economic status. While acknowledging that social institutions may constitute a larger influence on moral development, the researchers concluded that cognitively and socially rich family environments combined with high levels of parent-adolescent joint activity to facilitate moral identity formation.

Parenting Style and Moral Reasoning

Baumrind (1971, 1980), in the context of her longitudinal research work with families, described three distinctive parenting styles: permissive, authoritarian and authoritative. Authoritative parents are loving, controlling, communicative, and set high maturity demands for their children. In general, researchers have found these style parents the ones most likely to produce children with positive personality characteristics. Authoritarian parents are demanding, highly controlling, uncommunicative, and affectively cold and hostile. The permissive parenting style is at the opposing end of the continuum from the authoritarian parenting style. These parents practice either a laissez-faire approach to parenting or are simply neglectful. Regardless, permissive parents exercise little parental control and set few demands for mature behavior.

A substantial body of research supports the notion that an authoritative parenting style enhances juvenile moral reasoning (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998; Pratt & Diessner, 1994; Smetana, 1999; Walker & Hennig, 1999). In turn, parents that exhibit predominately permissive parenting styles (e.g., poor boundaries, confused communication, a lack of shared intentions, stereotyped family process, despair, cynicism, and denial of ambivalence) are associated with both juvenile delinquency and

lower levels of moral development within the child (Beavers, 1985; Beavers & Hampson, 1990; Dunton, 1989; Holstein, 1972; Walker & Taylor, 1991).

Furthermore, authoritarian parenting is also associated with the negation of the development of moral reasoning within the child (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998; Pratt & Diessner, 1994; Smetana, 1999; Walker & Hennig, 1999). Similar results are derived when using different research methodologies (Parikh, 1980). However, further research is still required to delineate the role of parenting styles in relation to enhancing moral development in different contexts (Walker & Taylor, 1991).

Baumrind's (1991) longitudinal study, the Family Socialization and Developmental Competence Project (FSP), best exemplifies these research efforts. The original population of Caucasian, middle-class parents and their children were drawn from 13 nursery schools in the Berkeley and Oakland, California, area. Parents were classified by teams of observers as authoritarian, authoritative, or permissive. A social competence instrument, developed by the researchers was used to evaluate the children (Time One). The children were assessed and placed into one of three categories: (a) socially incompetent, (b) partially socially competent, and (c) optimally socially competent. At Time Two ($n = 164$, average age = 9 years), no child raised by an authoritative couple was found incompetent. Further, no child raised by a permissive couple was found optimally competent. At Time Three ($n = 139$, average age = 14.5 years) children were again evaluated for competence and administered an additional test battery. Researchers found that authoritarian parents were effective in deterring problem behavior but that their children did not generally participate in prosocial behaviors. The children of authoritative parents were strongly associated with social responsibility and optimum competence.

In the few studies conducted, parents' level of moral reasoning has not been found to be a predictor of their children's level of moral development. However, parents' level of moral reasoning in conjunction with their style of parental functioning were reported to be significant predictors of children's level of moral reasoning development in a number of research studies (Dunton, 1989; Holstein, 1972; Parikh, 1980; Powers, 1982; Walker & Taylor, 1991). These studies on parenting revealed that supportive parental responsiveness, psychological differentiation, and parental discussion styles that involve "Socratic" (inductive) questioning (which exposed the child to higher levels of moral reasoning) serve to enhance moral development within the child. These techniques, when effectively administered, have been referred to as an authoritative parenting style.

Powers (1982) investigated the relationship among family interaction, parental moral judgment development, and adolescent moral judgment development. Her database consisted of two groups of families: 27 families with a psychiatrically hospitalized adolescent and 32 families with a nonpatient adolescent. All the families were intact and background variables of socio-economic status, education, and religion were reported to be controlled within the study. Siblings were not included in the study, and the mean age of the adolescents studied was 14.5 years of age. No correlation was found between parental moral judgment development and adolescent moral judgment development. Other analyses of the relationships between family interaction and moral judgment development indicated that, generally, for both mothers and fathers, support (i.e., affect stimulating behaviors) of the child was a positively related predictor of adolescent moral judgment development.

Dunton (1989) investigated parental practices associated with children's development of moral reasoning, including the relationship between parents' and

children's level of moral reasoning. She also examined the psychological characteristics of adolescents and adults who displayed the highest levels of moral reasoning. Subjects were recruited from families with children in nursery schools or elementary schools within the Berkeley area. Data on parental and child beliefs and behaviors were collected on over 100 families when the children were between the ages of three and four, nine and ten, and fourteen and fifteen. Dunton reported that parental responsiveness, psychological differentiation, and demandingness were positively related to high levels of moral reasoning in children, and restrictive parenting was associated with lower levels of such reasoning. However, Dunton reported few significant relationships between the parents' and the children's levels of moral reasoning. The only significant correlations in parents' and children's moral reasoning were reported for 9-year-old girls and their fathers, and between 14-year-old boys and their mothers.

In a comprehensive 2-year longitudinal study examining the parent's role, Walker and Taylor (1991) examined the contribution of parent's level of moral reasoning in predicting the child's level of moral reasoning. Participants included 53 family triads (mother, father, and child) with the children in grades one through ten. Families were recruited from the general population and defined as "generally well-functioning families" (p. 280). Families were evaluated while discussing both a hypothetical and a real-life dilemma, using Kohlberg's (Colby & Kohlberg, 1983a, 1983b) Moral Judgment Interview and the Powers' (1982, 1988) Developmental Environmental Coding System. The analysis of their data revealed no significant relationships between parents' and children's level of moral reasoning, between parents' interaction styles and their level of moral reasoning, between children's interaction styles and their level of moral reasoning, as well as no significant gender differences.

However, the researchers did report that parental level of moral reasoning in interaction with their parenting discussion/discipline style was a significant predictor of child's moral reasoning development over a subsequent 2-year interval. The parental discussion/discipline style that most strongly predicted the development of moral reasoning was characterized by "Socratic" questioning (e.g., eliciting the child's opinion, asking clarifying questions, paraphrasing, and checking for understanding), affective support, and efforts to present information to the child above his or her current level of moral reasoning. Conversely, parents that relied on operational and informative discussion styles, whereby the child is more likely to be given unilateral direction rather than enter into conversation, facilitated relatively little developmental growth of moral judgment in the child.

Theoretical Framework

A review of the theories that address juvenile delinquency within the fields of criminology, sociology, and psychology supports both the use of multi-target, ecological approaches and approaches aimed at enhancing prosocial values and/or moral reasoning. Further, these theories state that the primary medium toward this aim of enhanced values and reasoning lies within the family and that other social contexts and interpersonal factors constitute a supportive, but secondary medium. However, no existing theory of delinquency diversion/intervention adequately integrates these perspectives. Consequently, assessment of the juvenile's current level of moral reasoning and the family's capacity to facilitate or enhance such reasoning so that interventions may be implemented accordingly never takes place. In fact, preintervention assessments are seldom implemented and efforts at sorting those juveniles whose delinquent behavior is acute versus the start of chronic behavior are in their very infancy (Center, 2000;

Schumacher, & Kurz, 1994). Therefore, this study is based upon two unrelated theoretical perspectives: the neo-Kohlbergian's developmental model of moral reasoning (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, Thoma, 1999b) and Beavers' (Beavers & Hampson, 1990) Systems Model of Family Functioning.

Moral Reasoning

Most, if not all, contemporary thought regarding the development of moral reasoning is based upon the work of Lawrence Kohlberg (1958, 1969) who, in turn, expanded upon the work of Jean Piaget (1932/1965). Kohlberg (1976, 1981) identified morality with justice and asserted that there were six basic problem-solving strategies that people could use in making moral judgments. These strategies could be characterized in terms of six basic concepts of justice. The six concepts were believed to be developmentally sequential with the earlier concepts or stages, logically simpler and the later stages more complex elaborations of the former. The stages progressed from reasoning governed by fear of authority (preconventional stages one and two) to concern for others and society (conventional stages three and four), to concern for humanity and universal rights (postconventional stages five and six).

Researchers in recent years have challenged Kohlberg's developmental theory of moral reasoning. Neo-Kohlbergian (or contemporary) approaches to the development of moral reasoning incorporate gender (Gilligan, 1982, 1998), and cultural issues (Halstead, 1999; Rudy, Grusec, & Wolfe, 1999), and address the question of how morality is actualized by placing an equal emphasis on macro-morality and micro-morality (Pritchard, 1999; Rest et al., 1999b).

Critics claim that Kohlberg's approach was too focused on macro-morality (concerns for the formal structure of society, as defined by institutions, rules, and roles)

and failed to adequately address micro-morality (concerns for the face-to-face relations that people have in everyday life). Such criticisms have particular relevance with regard to defining moral reasoning during adolescence. Adolescence is the period of time when the individual discovers that people are related through institutions, role systems, and rules (i.e., "The System" or macro-morality). However, in addition to "the system," adolescents come to the realization that their peer group (the macro-morality) plays a very important part in their life experience.

As a solution to the criticisms found in Kohlberg's original theory, current neo-Kohlbergian thinking (Rest et al., 1999b) emphasizes the notion of schemas in the measurement of moral development. Schemas can be thought of as behavioral responses contingent upon concrete past experiences, while Kohlberg's stages are more abstract responses based on awareness. Neo-Kohlbergians presume that people make sense of moral situations in terms of three developmentally ordered schemas: personal interests (Kohlberg's stages two and three), which first develops in childhood; maintaining norms (Kohlberg's stage four), which first develops in adolescence; and post-conventional thinking (Kohlberg's stages five and six), which typically develops in adolescence and adulthood. Unlike the static "staircase" stages of Kohlberg that transpire upward one step at a time, neo-Kohlbergians argue that a more accurate model allows for upward movement in terms of a gradually shifting distribution of preferences toward higher ordered moral reasoning. Neo-Kohlbergian's claim that Kohlberg's "staircase model" does not account for the fact that the individual typically has multiple ways of thinking (including macro- and micro-morality) about most phenomena and that developmental change involves shifts in the frequency (rather than steps) with which the individual relies on concept-driven ways of moral thinking (Rest et al., 1999b).

Measuring Moral Reasoning

Berkowitz and Grych (1998) remind us that moral reasoning does not exist spontaneously and disconnected from the larger core of what constitutes healthy psychology. Rather, a child's moral development is integrated with other aspects of that child's psychological make-up. They offer as an example, "To be morally effective one needs self-control. However, self-control can also support criminal or sadistic behaviour" (p. 372).

Goodman (1998) discussed the value and dangers of assessing the moral development of children. She acknowledged that there were powerful reasons to resist the introduction of moral language into psychological assessments such as (a) the negative effects of labeling, (b) the increased risks of subjectivity, and (c) the substitution of "illness" for what are in fact social and cultural differences. However, in defense of assessing children, Goodman noted "This domain should not be singled out" (p. 478). In fact, evaluating intellectual and behavioral deviations is the norm. Yet, these activities continue to carry many of these same risks of labeling, subjectivity, and multicultural concerns. She noted six advantages gained by assessment, which included (a) enhancing one's understanding of self, in particular one's moral identity; (b) offering an alternative set of values to consider and aspire towards; (c) creating a better understanding of moral justification of children (e.g., the ability to distinguish among the child who steals out of principle, in defiance of principle, or without principles); (d) heightening teachers' awareness through the introduction of moral language and concepts; (e) more fully engaging parents into the discussion of their child's moral framework; and (f) increasing the likelihood that children will be raised with an operative morality while decreasing the need for adult surveillance and punishment.

Testing instruments that measure the degree of moral development include the Defining Issues Test (DIT) (Rest, 1979, 1986a, 1986b). This test is derived from the work of Lawrence Kohlberg and the cognitive development tradition of research in moral reasoning. Participants are given six hypothetical stories, patterned after the Kohlberg dilemmas, and 12 items that represent crucial issues or important concerns for someone making a decision about the hypothetical story. Participants are asked to rate and rank the items. On the basis of how the items are rated and ranked a developmental score is calculated.

A variety of scores result from the DIT. Most consistent with the Kohlbergian stage theory of moral development is the DIT's "D" score. The D score is a composite index score measuring the extent to which the participant gives high ratings to high stage items and low ratings to low stage items. Hence the D score locates the participant in terms of a continuous number representing the developmental continuum of moral development. However, the most frequently used is the "P" ("Principled" moral thinking) score. The P score (range 0-91, $M = 39.1$, $SD = 14.84$) indicates the extent to which the participant considers stages five or six (post-conventional thinking) as most important. Hence, individuals with higher DIT scores are more likely to exhibit prosocial behaviors.

Enhancing the Moral Reasoning of Juvenile Delinquents

If there is an *a priori* within the field of criminology it is the belief in the all but direct correlation between the level of a juvenile's moral reasoning and the likelihood of avoiding delinquency (Braithwaite, 1989; Grossmann, 1996; Hirschi, 1969; Kohlberg, 1958, 1976; Nessel, 1998; Springer, 1996). Quoting Hirschi, (1969) "[T]he less a person believes he should obey the rules, the more likely he is to violate them" (p.26). In fact, Lawrence Kohlberg, the most prominent figure in the field of moral development, argued

that to know the good is to choose the good (Kohlberg, 1981). Over time a body of experimental evidence has accumulated that indicates lower levels of moral reasoning for juvenile offenders (Aleixo & Norris, 2000; Henggeler & Borduin, 1990).

Efforts to enhance moral reasoning within juvenile populations have been successful. Prosocial or character education programs have existed in the nation's schools from their conception and continue to be employed (Battistich, Watson, Solomon, Schaps, & Solomon 1991; Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999a). For example, Youniss and Yates (1999), in an analysis of longitudinal studies where youth participated in community service, consistently found that such participation resulted in later adult moral-civic activism. In keeping with Erikson's (1968) notions of development, the authors contend that moral actions lead to moral identity. This in turn leads to further moral actions and subsequent solidification of moral identity.

Specific efforts to enhance the moral reasoning of juvenile delinquents were made by Taylor and Walker (1997). One hundred and one institutionalized young offenders were paired off and subsequently participated in one hour per day of group and dyadic discussions of moral dilemmas over a 30-day period. It was found that when one member of the pair had a higher moral reasoning/peer status than the other the participant with the lower moral reasoning/peer status experienced a significant increase in moral reasoning over the course of the intervention. The process has been described by the authors as "disequilibrium." "Disequilibrium is engendered by exposure to higher-stage reasoning or by experiences of cognitive conflict. Such experiences challenge ways of thinking, revealing their inadequacy, and thereby stimulate development toward a more equilibrated stage" (Walker & Taylor, 1991, pp. 264-265).

Toward this end, many diversion programs are now being developed and implemented with the specific intention to strengthen prosocial values and enhance the development of moral reasoning. Teen Courts, an example of Braithwaite's (1989) theory of reintegrative shaming, may be the most noteworthy example of this effort. In fact, the American Bar Association Division for Public Education (Nessel, 1998) suggests that the rapid growth of Teen Courts is compelling evidence that they are filling this recognizable need for diversion interventions based on enhancing moral reasoning. Juvenile Teen Court defendants are sanctioned by their peers for their delinquent behavior and in the process exposed to other adolescents with higher moral reasoning/peer status. Further, Teen Court sanctions require hands-on participation in prosocial activities (Godwin, 2000).

Braithwaite (1989) claims that the best place to see the enhancement or facilitation of prosocial values (reintegrative shaming) at work is in loving families, not diversion programs. Within this context, efforts to correct the juvenile's deviant behaviors are not done in isolation from the rest of their relationship with the family, nor does it permanently change the status of juvenile from "child" to "criminal child." Rather, corrective measures are imposed within a framework of reconcilable and mutually supportive interests. However, Braithwaite emphasizes that if the juvenile is constantly fearful or insecure in the relationship with his or her parents, the withdrawal of approval (shaming) will not succeed in establishing prosocial behaviors. Hence, when efforts are made to address moral reasoning within the juvenile, family process must also be addressed.

Braithwaite's (1989) claim is supported by the work of Berkowitz and Grych (1998) who identified the parenting processes related empirically to the behaviors

associated with the development of moral reasoning in children. They found that induction, defined as "when parents take the time to explain their behavior to their children and show awareness of how that behavior affects the child" (p. 382), may be the single most powerful parental influence on children's development of moral reasoning.

Family Functioning and Parenting Style

Family systems theorists vary in how they conceptualize family dynamics, yet they share many core beliefs (Cheston, 2000). Of these beliefs, the cornerstone of family systems theory is the presumption that each family member's behavior is interconnected with those of each member of the family and that as a system must interact in harmony to insure effective functioning. Thus detecting transactive regularities makes it possible to detect familial variables including parenting styles (Scabini & Cigoli, 1998).

While a number of respected models for codifying family functioning exist, in this study family functioning is conceptualized in terms of the Beavers Systems Model (Beavers, 1990). This model defines family functioning in terms of a continuum of health/competence, conflict, cohesion, directive leadership, and emotional expressiveness. Optimal families possess qualities of capable negotiation, respect for individual choice and ambivalence, warmth, intimacy, and humor. Families are formally assessed and placed upon a continuum based on their degree of health/competence, conflict, cohesion, directive leadership, and emotional expressiveness. The continuum of family functioning is divided into five classifications: (a) Optimal with the qualities of capable negotiation, respect for individual choice and ambivalence, warmth, intimacy, and humor; (b) Adequate defined as families with relatively clear boundaries, the ability to negotiate but with pain and ambivalence reluctantly recognized, and some periods of warmth and sharing interspersed with control struggles; (c) Midrange defined as families

with relatively clear communication, a consistent effort at control when "loving" also means controlling, elements of anger and/or anxiety/depression, and ambivalence is handled by repression; (d) Borderline defined as families that shift from chaotic to tyrannical control efforts, where boundaries fluctuate from poor to rigid, elements of depression and distancing, and outbursts of rage; and (e) Severely Dysfunctional with the qualities of poor boundaries, confused communication, lack of shared attentional focus, stereotyped family process, despair, cynicism, and denial of ambivalence (Beavers, 1990). With respect to parenting, most of the family system models focus on three sets of variables: emotional support, parental control, and consistency (Cusinato, 1998). These variable sets, as first conceptualized by Baumrind (1971), are manifest into three parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive (Baumrind, 1971; Gardano, 1998). Elements of the authoritative parenting style include freedom within limits, effective communication, and high maturity demands. The permissive parenting style is defined as communicative but wielding little control and setting few demands for mature behavior. In turn, the authoritarian parenting style is defined as highly controlling, unaffectionate, and noncommunicative (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998; Gardano, 1998). A substantial body of research supports the notion that the authoritarian parenting style is significantly more effective in facilitating the development of moral reasoning in children (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998; Pratt & Diessner, 1994; Smetana, 1999; Walker & Hennig, 1999).

Enhancing the Family Functioning of Juvenile Delinquents

Walker (1999; Walker & Hennig, 1999) concluded that in dysfunctional families moral reasoning and moral behavior by necessity are focused upon the self. Children within this family context of disharmony and blighted hope find themselves presented

with few opportunities to develop an understanding of the norms associated with loyalty to the group, concern for the expectations of others, or disapproval of that which hurts others. Henggeler and Borduin (1990) note that a high number of juvenile delinquents are at Stage 2 of Kohlberg's (1976) developmental typology. At the Kohlbergian Stage 2 level of moral development the individual is primarily concerned with the gratification of their needs, whereas at Stage 3, the individual is more concerned with social conformity, approval, and meeting the expectations of others.

Beavers (1990) defines families with children that exhibit chronic delinquent behavior as severely dysfunctional. Such families experience a major and pervasive absence of coherent structure and leadership. Parental efforts to provide structure to parent-child interactions have been abandoned. Consequently, there is an absence of both individual and dyadic boundaries. The concept of "family" is tenuous or nonexistent and members have adopted an "each person for himself" attitude. While in optimal families members take responsibility for their actions both inside and outside the family environment, these less functional families avoid and/or displace responsibility. Under these circumstances, these types of families commonly blame others or attack the accuser. For example, verbal signs of avoidance include speaking in third person or in plurals (e.g., "everyone else does . . .," or "all husbands . . ."). More significantly, while optimal families acknowledge that members make mistakes but contend that such members should not be punished for acknowledging personal responsibilities for those mistakes, the opposite is true in dysfunctional families.

Efforts to address juvenile delinquency within the context of family functioning has centered on the use of multi-target ecological treatments. These treatments include programs such as the University of Florida's project Back-on-Track (Myers et al., 1998).

Juveniles' participate with their parents or primary caregivers. Together they receive group and family mental health counseling services. The juvenile participates in empathy-building exercises, and psychoeducational services. The approach was developed to target the multifaceted contributing factors to delinquent behavior (e.g., ineffective parenting techniques, impaired parent-child communication, negative peer influences, low self-esteem, and poor problem-solving skills).

Need For The Study

Considering the financial aspects associated with juvenile delinquency alone warrants the need to study the issue of juvenile assessment and screening (Howitt & Moore, 1993). Cohen (1998) estimates that the value of keeping a high risk youth in school and away from a long-term criminal career is between \$1.7 million and \$2.3 million in tangible costs such as law enforcement, incarceration, court costs, property loss, and medical expenses. The intangible costs of juvenile crime (pain, suffering, fear, and the lessening of the community's quality of life) are much more difficult to measure.

To address these issues, researchers have demonstrated that juvenile delinquency is associated with many factors (Bazemore, 1998; Wolber & Banze, 1998). Therefore, individual and family assessments preceding any effort at delinquency intervention is a logical and necessary first step toward diversion program efficacy. Yet the use of assessment is dramatically under-utilized, nonstandardized, and lacking a comprehensive theoretical foundation (Center, 2000). Specifically, left undefined is the relationship between the offending adolescent's degree of moral reasoning in relation to the parent's degree of moral reasoning and how this relationship is mitigated by the variables of parenting style and family functioning.

Purpose of The Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of three familial variables on the level of moral reasoning demonstrated by first-time adolescent offenders. These familial variables are parental disciplinary style, perceived family functioning, and parent's level of moral reasoning/judgment. The sample for this study was adolescents who have committed a criminal offense for the first time and their parent(s) and/or caregiver(s).

Research Questions

The questions that were examined in this study are as follows:

- What level of moral reasoning do first-time adolescent offenders demonstrate and is there a positive association between the level of moral reasoning demonstrated by the adolescent and that demonstrated by her/his parent(s)?
- What is the level of family functioning reported by adolescent first-time offenders and their parents and is there a positive association between the level of moral reasoning demonstrated by the adolescent and the level of their family's functioning?
- What is the parental disciplinary style demonstrated by the parents of adolescents who are first-time offenders and is there a positive association between the level of moral reasoning demonstrated by the adolescent and her/his parent's disciplinary style?
- To what extent do the familial factors of parental disciplinary style, parental level of moral reasoning, and the level of family functioning influence the level of moral reasoning demonstrated by first-time adolescent offenders?

Definition Of Terms

For the purposes of this study, adolescent refers to individuals ages twelve through eighteen.

A chronic offender is a juvenile with four or more referrals to the juvenile justice system for an act of delinquency.

Delinquency is defined as juvenile behavior that, if an adult, would constitute a criminal act (e.g., retail theft) or otherwise require adjudication (e.g., school attendance).

A family functioning level describes the family's collected ability to address tasks such as problem solving, organization, and emotional climate. The extent to which family members are able to effectively perform these tasks while interacting and adapting to change determines their global level of family health or competence. For the purposes of this study, the Beavers (Beavers & Hampson, 1990) theory of family functioning will be employed. This model provides a continuum defining family functioning based on their degree of health/competence, conflict, cohesion, directive leadership, and emotional expressiveness.

A first-time offender, acute offender, or nonrecidivist is a juvenile with only one referral to the juvenile justice system.

For the purposes of this study juvenile refers to individuals ages birth through eighteen.

Moral reasoning is the basic conceptual framework that the individual uses to analyze a social-moral problem and to judge a proper course of action (Rest, 1986a, 1986b). For the purposes of this study, these conceptual frameworks are qualitatively grouped and sequenced by stage typing in accordance with the Kohlbergian line of research. The degree of moral reasoning development does not necessarily indicate an individual's worth as a person, their loyalty, kindness, or sociability (Rest, 1986a, 1986b).

For the purposes of this study, the term parents is not limited to the biological parents of the juvenile. Rather, it is defined as the two individuals that spend the most time with the juvenile while providing traditional parenting responsibilities. These

individuals may include, but are not limited to, biological parents, stepparents, foster parents, grandparents, and other relatives.

Parenting Style is the process by which parents provide nurturing to their child (i.e., emotional support, parental control, degrees of consistency). These variables, as first conceptualized by Baumrind (1971), are manifested in three different parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. Elements of the authoritative parenting style include freedom within limits, effective communication, and high maturity demands placed on the children. Authoritarian parents are demanding, highly controlling, uncommunicative, and affectively cold and hostile. Parents that practice the permissive parenting style use either a laissez-faire approach to parenting or are simply neglectful. Regardless, permissive parents exercise little parental control and set few demands for mature behavior.

Postconventional moral reasoning constitutes the relative importance, when addressing a moral dilemma, that an individual places on "principled morality" rather than a concern with the immediate consequences, uniform norms, or reciprocity at the expense of insuring equitability. For the purposes of this study, post-conventional moral development is defined as Kohlberg's (Rest, 1979) stages five (the morality of the social contract and the morality of intuitive humanism), and six (the morality of principles of ideal social cooperation).

Recidivism rate refers to the rate that juveniles, within a specific population, reoffend over a predetermined length of time. Typically, recidivism rates are measured at six months, 1 year, 18 months, 3 years, and/or first offense to the age of majority.

Organization of the Study

This proposal is organized into three chapters. Chapter 1 serves to introduce the scope of the problem, the theoretical foundations undergirding the study, the definitions of related terms, the need for the study, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. In Chapter 2 the related literature is reviewed. Chapter 3 contains the research methodology, which includes a description of the population and sample; the instrumentation; the sampling procedures; data collection procedures; the data analytic procedures; and the study's limitations.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review of literature is organized into six sections: (a) literature describing the challenges facing the juvenile justice system, (b) a discussion of the continuum of delinquency, (c) literature describing approaches for assessing and screening delinquents, (d) literature describing the theories of delinquency, (e) literature concerning the correlates of delinquency, (f) literature on moral reasoning theory and assessment, (g) literature on family theory and assessment, (h) literature describing promising intervention outcomes, and (i) a summation.

Challenges Facing the Juvenile Justice System

The juvenile justice system was developed in the 1900s to utilize an informal court procedure directed at rehabilitating the child rather than establishing guilt or imposing punishment. The system uses a case-by-case approach in its decision-making and views the juvenile as less sophisticated than adults, less committed to a criminal lifestyle, and less culpable for their wrong doings. Conversely, the juvenile is seen as more amenable to treatment and rehabilitative efforts (Bortner, 1988). With respect to the treatment and rehabilitation of juveniles when first entering the justice system, however, little effort is made toward individual assessment. Only recently have there been attempts to systematically differentiate among those juveniles whose first act of delinquency was simply a singular event versus the first step in a long-term pattern of delinquent behavior

The Challenge of Diversion

A controversy associated with the juvenile justice system's efforts to treat or rehabilitate juveniles is their utilization of diversion programs. At the current time, for example, the overwhelming majority of first-time offending juveniles (67.5% in Florida) participate in diversion programs—whose fundamental goal is to contain recidivism—in lieu of traditional juvenile court (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice; 1998; Fox et al., 1994). As a consequence, a plethora of diversion programs have now been developed and implemented to meet this growing need. However, reviews of diversion program outcome studies consistently indicate mixed results (Bohnstedt, 1978; Brown, Miller, Jenkins, & Rhodes, 1989; Davidson, Redner, Admur, Mitchell, 1990; Dunford, Osgood, & Weichselbaum, 1998; Kammer, 1997; Raush, 1983). These mixed results are often attributed to the field's failure to standardize procedures such as treatment approaches or outcome measures and lends validity to the arguments of the field's detractors (Braithwaite, 1989; Cragg, 1992; Umbreit, 1985). Kammer (1997), one such critic of the current practices in this field, notes:

Diversion has become a routine part of juvenile justice since the 1960's and 1970's. In general, the concept refers to the use of a wide range of interventions as alternatives to either initial or continued formal processing. Juvenile diversion is a controversial practice that continues to be insufficiently understood, owing in part to a dwindling amount of research attention in recent years. Many diversion programs are never studied systematically, and those that do undergo research scrutiny are often quite different from one another in terms of components and operation. Enormous variation across programs has led to mixed findings and created impediments to generalization. Ideally, each program should be studied in its own context so that various programming initiatives can be compared and generalizations can be qualified appropriately. (pp. 264-265)

Despite their popular use, four specific and significant criticisms have been leveled at diversion programs. First, many critics see the content and design of these programs as inconsistent and capricious (Braithwaite, 1989; Cragg, 1992; Umbreit,

1985). The program philosophies range from those that ignore the delinquent behavior as a normal developmental phase to "tough love" boot camps. Whitehead and Lab (1996) address this issue in general terms by saying "An attempt to outline the "typical" successful diversion program is doomed to fail due to over generalizing the findings of different studies." (p. 272) Similarly, Drennan (1995) addresses this issue in terms of one type of program (Teen Courts), "Measurement of the success or effectiveness of programs such as the Teen Court program is problematic in part because there are a number of ways to define "success" and "effectiveness," all of which may be regarded as valid depending on the perspective that is adopted" (p. 18).

Second, the process of assigning juveniles to diversion programs has been judged as too arbitrary. In jurisdictions in which there are different types of diversion programs available (e.g., tutorial-based versus family counseling based programs), it is common for juveniles to be assigned haphazardly to different programs (Howitt & Moore, 1993).

Third, the effectiveness of the diversion process has been called into question (Braithwaite, 1999; Braithwaite & Pettit, 1990; Fox et al., 1994; Greenwood, 1996). Many critics believe that diversion programs have little or no lasting impact in increasing a juvenile offender's prosocial behaviors. Specifically, these critics link program ineffectiveness with the failure to incorporate the local community and/or the family within the intervention focus (Braithwaite, 1989; Henggeler et al., 1998; Myers et al., 1998). To address this concern, some States have begun to withdraw from the responsibility of administering diversion programs and have assigned this responsibility to the local community (Schumacher & Kurz, 1994). Other critics link program ineffectiveness with the methods most commonly used to evaluate programs. Such evaluations focus on the actual number of juveniles served rather than measuring specific

treatment outcomes such as recidivism rate or enhanced prosocial values (Center, 2000). As a consequence, the resources of many diversion programs are focused on securing referrals and then processing referral data at the expense of implementing treatment or measuring treatment outcomes.

Finally, critics claim that the system's focus on valuing the quantity of juveniles served results in a tendency to cast too wide a net in the search for referrals and that the availability of programs in and of itself leads to increased utilization. For example, "cost per juvenile participant" is a determinant in the process of awarding of competitive grants. Consequently, increasing the number of referrals, regardless of how such increases may effect treatment outcomes, is a frequent temptation to program administrators and may influence the parameters they set in the search for referrals. Conversely, when faced with a substantial backlog of juvenile cases slated for trial, state prosecutors or public defenders may feel pressured to refer inappropriate cases to a diversion program rather than expend resources to process these cases through the court (Braithwaite, 1999; Williams & Rodgers, 1996).

The Shift to Retribution

The position of 'justice as a means of intervention' by the courts has it detractors. Fueled by ever-increasing caseloads and conflicting criminological theories, debate transpires within the juvenile court system as to what extent the focus on treatment and rehabilitation comes at the expense of the victims, the community (Bazemore, 1998), and of addressing juvenile offenders as moral free agents (Grossmann, 1996; Maples, 1996). Justice Springer (1996) of the Supreme Court of Nevada exemplifies the frustration shared by those who feel that ineffective therapeutic interventions come at the expense of administering justice. Springer (1996) states that in the nation's juvenile courts moral

principles are "totally at odds with the theoretical foundations of the juvenile court system and incompatible with the "individual treatment" model of traditional juvenile justice philosophy. . . . The juvenile court is not a moral court; it is an *amoral* court" (p. iii).

In the absence of consistently positive outcome data regarding diversion intervention efficacy, the general public and elected officials are slowly shifting their support from therapeutic interventions (e.g., tutoring, parenting classes, vocational counseling) toward an emphasis on punitive or retributive interventions such as boot camps (Arthur, 1998; Hurst, 1998; Merol et al., 1997). Bazemore (1998) offers an additional explanation as to why the general public has reacted with disdain regarding efforts at therapeutic interventions:

The role of the courts is to insure that this sanctioning function is accomplished in a way that is fair to all concerned and meets overall community needs. Influenced by a court ideology that has historically officially eschewed punishment in favor of a focus on the needs or "best interests" of delinquent youths, juvenile court treatment requirements often seem detached from the offense and the person or persons harmed by it. It is little wonder then that crime victims and the public seem confused about the sanctioning mandate of the juvenile court. (p. 67)

One need only watch a few hours of daytime talk shows to find examples of how the general public's viewpoint has shifted. Ominous, muscle-bound, drill instructors "stare down" obnoxious teenagers on national television, spitting threats inches from the child's face as their parent and the audience cheer the event. The increased use of legislative waivers, which allows the state to decrease the minimum age when defining when juveniles can be prosecuted as adults, also exemplifies the manifestation of this "get-tough" viewpoint from elected officials. In 1995, 700 pieces of federal, state, and local legislation were introduced aimed at prosecuting minors as adults (Merol et al., 1997) and continue to be introduced yearly (Snyder et al., 2000).

This current shift toward "scared-straight" and "get-tough" interventions does not have an empirical basis of support. To the contrary, research indicates that these interventions do not work in reducing future delinquent acts (Dryfoos, 1990; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2000). An evaluation of eight "shock incarceration" or "boot camp" programs by the U.S. Department of Justice (MacKenzie & Souryal, 1994) revealed that five programs did not successfully reduce recidivism and that the three programs that experienced lower recidivism had noteworthy similarities not necessarily associated with shock incarceration. The successful programs included a six-month after-care component that incorporated intensive supervision, a strong focus on rehabilitation, voluntary participation, selection from prison-bound referrals, higher dropout rates and longer program duration. The authors conclude that these components could have an impact on offenders with or without the "boot camp" atmosphere.

Furthermore, a punitive intervention approach is counter-intuitive to well-established theories of human development and social learning (Baumrind, 1997; Ellis & Ellis, 1989; Garbarino, 1999; Santrock, 1995). Such theories recognize that the adult treatment/intervention facilitators are role models for the juveniles. Hence, the aggressive behaviors exhibited by the adult facilitators will be indirectly taught to the juveniles. Of greater concern, in this type of treatment/intervention context, the juveniles learn that aggressive behavior is a socially acceptable method to induce change in other people (Einstadter & Henry, 1995; Jensen & Kingston, 1986). Hence, resorting to aggressive interventions may only serve to increase aggressive behavior in the juvenile. In fact, aggressive behaviors exhibited by a juvenile's role model are considered a strong risk factor for future delinquent behavior, not a means of intervention (Farrington, 1991, 1995; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2000).

In a survey of 30 incarcerated juveniles in Connecticut, 83% reported previously witnessing a shooting, 67% had witnessed a stabbing, and 53% witnessed a killing. Sixty-three percent reported having been shot at and 50% reported having been stabbed. In a similar survey of New York City's juvenile detention center, 79% had seen a person stabbed or shot, 58% had a family member who had been stabbed or shot and 38% had been stabbed or shot themselves (Marans & Berkman, 1997). Developmental psychologists argue that juveniles who come from these environments are more likely to benefit from what Garbarino (1999) refers to as a "monastery model." As explained by Garbarino (1999, p. 238) such models attempt to focus on benevolence and offer the health counterbalance to a "socially toxic society that defines manhood in the terms of aggression, power, and material acquisition."

Research suggests that aggressive "scared-straight" and "get-tough" interventions may be particularly inappropriate with female juvenile populations. Sociologists note two significant concerns. Female delinquents placed in correctional settings are more likely to be past victims of physical and/or sexual abuse. These juveniles would perceive an aggressive intervention approach as the continuation of abuse. Second, female delinquents are more likely than males to be held in detention centers for less serious or violent offenses and are more likely to spend a greater amount of time in detention centers than males who commit the same type of offenses (Chesney-Lind & Sheldon, 1992; Daniel, 1999). Sociologists argue that more effective intervention approaches for females use models that provide a safe and supportive environment rather than "shock incarceration" (Daniel, 1999).

In fact, there may be many causes and characteristics associated with juvenile delinquency in first-time offenders and in habitual offenders (Bazemore, 1998; Wolber &

Banze, 1998). Consequently, researchers of juvenile delinquency now recommend a more balanced integrative approach to intervention with a continuum of services and sanctions (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2000). Toward this end, efforts at sorting those first-time offending juveniles whose delinquent act is a limited, acute pattern of behavior from those whose offenses are the start of a chronic pattern of behavior have begun (Center, 2000; Schumacher & Kurz, 1994). In turn, efforts at delinquency prevention and intervention are beginning to take into consideration those characteristics that distinguish chronic from acute levels of juvenile offenders. Yet, the office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency prevention is aware of no community implementing a fully operational graduated sanctions system (Morley, Rossman, Kopczynski, Buck, & Gouvis, 2000). And, until such time as these efforts are fully actualized, the current constricted perspective to diversion intervention will continue to explain much of the field's failures and mixed successes with this population (Kammer, 1997).

The Continuum of Delinquency

The conceptualization of a community-wide system of graduated sanctions is intended to achieve balanced and restorative justice -- accountability, public safety, and competency development -- based on the assumption that a well-designed system of treatment and punishment options can offer more than bad choices between sending kids to jail or sending them to the beach" (Morley et al., 2000, p. 82).

An Intervention Continuum and Levels of Chronicity

Wilson and Howell (1993) described the potential to combine fair, humane, and appropriate sanctions with treatment and rehabilitation in a continuum of care composed of diverse programs. However, the field has only recently begun to focus on the development of standardized preintervention assessment criteria based on *key* predictive

factors that can differentiate among acute levels of delinquent behavior and the likelihood of chronic levels of delinquent behavior (Towberman, 1992; Williams & Rodgers, 1996). In turn, the field has yet to standardize intervention approaches, outcome criteria, and the measurement of outcome criteria (Center, 2000). Yet, the call for the development of standardized, preintervention assessment of juveniles is not a new phenomenon. Scharf (1978) warned of the possibilities of both gross inequity and unfairness to particular offenders in the absence of standardized assessment over 20 years ago, when the process of diverting juvenile offenders was in its relative infancy. In addition to minimizing the arbitrary or unnecessary placement of juveniles in diversion programs, or the risk to the community associated with failing to restrain juveniles that may be violent, procedures that might differentiate among juvenile offenders seems a necessary prerequisite for determining program efficacy (Schumacher & Kurz, 1994).

Evidence of the Continuum

Every chronic offender is at one time a first-time (acute) offender by definition. Therefore simple logic dictates that there are significant within-group differences among the general population of first-time juvenile offenders. In fact, according to recent statistics from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (2000), slightly more than half of all first-time juvenile offenders never reoffend after being exposed to an initial intervention administered by the juvenile justice system. In turn, only eight to ten percent of the first-time offenders become habitual offenders and in turn ultimately responsible for over half of all juvenile crime committed in any given community (Schumacher, 1994).

The continuum of chronicity is not lost on division program directors. For example, when outcome is measured only by gross standards such as recidivism, those

diversion programs most selective when screening referrals will be the programs that produce the more impressive outcomes (i.e., lower recidivism rates). Research studies of Teen Courts, a relatively standardized approach to diversion, illustrate the point.

A research study of the Arlington, Texas Teen Court reported a recidivism rate of 25% over 24 months in 1986 (Hissong, 1991). However, an evaluation of the Santa Rosa, California Teen Court program revealed a recidivism rate of only 2.5% over an 18-month period in 1993 (Jones, 1994). In turn, findings from other evaluations of Teen Courts throughout the nation revealed recidivism rates that ran the spectrum between Arlington's 25% and Santa Rosa's 2.5% (Butts & Buck, 2000).

The dissimilarity of recidivism rates within a relatively standardized approach, most often reserved for first-time offenders, offers a number of suggestions. Foremost, a continuum of chronicity both exists and must be addressed. And, as a consequence, in the absence of standardized preintervention assessment criteria, the measurement of recidivism does not capture program effectiveness. In fact, an analysis of the research conducted since 1987 on Teen Court programs by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) included numerous cautions by the authors (Butts & Buck, 2000) concerning selection/referral bias and the possibility of distorted results.

In addition to the difficulties associated with attempting to measure recidivism across time, programs, cultures, natures of offense, and various other subgroups, Garbarino (1999) adds

Several of the boys I have interviewed who were incarcerated for low-level offenses admitted to much more violent offenses for which they were never arrested. One boy committed forty-eight arm robberies before he was arrested on an unrelated assault charge. Thus, the meaning of arrest rate as a true indicator focuses on this one measure of programmatic failure and success. (p. 211)

Challenges in the Development of a Continuum

Researchers have demonstrated that juvenile delinquency can be associated with many factors (Bazemore, 1998; Wolber & Banze, 1998). In the absence of an agreement about key factors and a reliable means of assessment of those factors for first-time offending juveniles, researchers within the field face imposing problems when attempting to place juveniles in specific interventions or measure intervention outcome (Gable & Brown, 1978; Williams, 1999; Wolber, & Banze, 1998). For example, an evaluation of the 14 states using risk-focused classification systems for serious, violent, and chronic juvenile offenders (Krisberg, Currie, Onck, & Weibushet, 1995) revealed that the use of different types of risk assessment instruments resulted in very different numbers of offenders recommended for placement at each risk level. However, if juveniles were assessed in terms of several common variables such as their level of moral reasoning and/or their parent's level of parenting skills both the referral screening process and intervention/treatment outcomes might have greater predictive power. As explained by Garbarino

Rarely, if ever, does one single risk factor tell the whole story or determine a person's future. Rather, it is the buildup of negative influences and experiences that accounts for differences in how youth turn out. . . .If we try to find the cause of youth violence, we will be frustrated and confused; we may even decide it is completely unpredictable and incomprehensible. (1999, p.10)

A second challenge facing the field concerns the method of data collection. As reported by Patterson and Chamberlain (1988) the method most widely used by mental health professionals when work with antisocial children—both measuring pretreatment assessment and treatment outcome—are parent self-report measurements. They argue that such measures are highly susceptible to subjectivity. Patterson and Chamberlain (1988) have concluded from the results of a continuing series of research projects, that

distressed families are caught in interacting, enmeshed, negative exchanges. And as a consequence, parents of problem children tend to be overly inclusive in classifying deviant child behavior, classifying more neutral child behavior as deviant. In addition, such families possess a correlation of coercive behaviors that can be observed among its members. Furthermore, the researchers note that in these families, maternal depression in particular may account for as much as 15% of the error variance in self-report measures. Conversely, outcome measures are often unreliable. They content that a significant number of parents will report that the juvenile has shown "some" improvement even when third-party home observation data show no change in or a worsening of problem behaviors.

Finally, the development of a continuum must take into consideration developmental issues. Most of the salient predictors of delinquency change at different developmental stages and interact in complex ways (Kumpfer, 1994). For example, Paterson and Joerger (1993) assert that juveniles that commit delinquent acts at young ages are more likely to act individually while adolescents are more influenced by peers.

Assessment and Screening of Delinquents

The use of assessment is dramatically under-utilized, nonstandardized, and lacking a comprehensive theoretical foundation (Center, 2000). Specifically, left undefined is the relationship between the offending juvenile's degree of moral reasoning in relation to the parent's degree of moral reasoning and how this relationship is mitigated by the variable of parenting style and family functioning.

Assessment Models and Procedures

Minimal assessment models are restricted to determining if the juvenile possesses suicidal or homicidal ideation, whether the juvenile is under the influence of drugs, and

whether the juvenile can be released to a parent or guardian. Such assessments are typically made by law enforcement at the scene of the offense. Subsequently, staff attorneys at the local office of the state attorney will make prosecutorial decisions and, contingent upon the availability of resources, more elaborate referral decisions based on the law enforcement officer's incident report.

More sophisticated assessment models employ the use of juvenile assessment centers. Such centers may produce an individualized assessment for the court and/or office of the state attorney based on a review of predictors of delinquency and provide the juvenile justice system with an educated opinion to better manage problem areas believed to be contributory to repeated criminal behavior (Wolber & Banze, 1998).

The most sophisticated assessment models employ the use of test batteries to measure intelligence, aptitude, and personality traits. In addition, these assessment models will interview the juvenile and their collateral contacts, review court records, and when available review previous psychological evaluations, education reports, and discharge summaries (Wolber & Banze, 1998). Such elaborate procedures are usually reserved for the more serious offenses or for juveniles who are habitual offenders. First-time offenders or those with minor offenses are not typically given such assessments. Consequently, for first-time offending juveniles, determinations are made as to their placement in a diversion program, or referral for mental health counseling, or other salient issues without empirical data.

The increased and enhanced use of assessment procedures is widely endorsed by the juvenile justice system. However, researchers have had inconsistent results in identifying factors that are reliably associated with recidivism. For example, there is no

useful correlation among recidivism and gender, ethnicity/race, custody status, age, or type of referral offense (Kammer, 1997; Towberman, 1994).

Lemmon and Calhoon (1998) evaluated the Indiana Department of Correction's Risk Assessment Instrument (RAI), which that agency used to predict juvenile recidivism. The instrument was patterned after a Wisconsin instrument and is similar to those found in other states. Lemmon and Calhoon found the RAI to be a very poor predictor of recidivism. In particular, they found the test had a low internal consistency and problems with item scoring. While the RAI was developed from a literature review, care was not taken to ensure that test items actually measured the construct. The authors also report that the terms were poorly defined and open to various interpretations.

Sociologists Williams and Rodgers (1996) developed a needs assessment instrument, based exclusively on juvenile court case histories, to address the issue of incarceration versus probation. Based on variables from various theoretical positions, seven possible predictors were selected for analysis: mother-child relationship problems, alienation, denial of blame, school attendance, self-concept, ethnicity, and subsequent record. They found that only one variable, recidivism, served as a predictor of future incarceration.

Developmental psychologist Garbarino's (1999) research demonstrates the confluence of personal, familial, and community factors that lead juveniles toward the risk of exhibiting extreme violent juvenile behavior. Building from the previous work of Zagar et al. (1991), Garbarino offers a set of risk factors for extreme violent juvenile behavior. Juveniles who possess the following risk factors are twice as likely to commit murder when compared to the general population: family members with a history of criminal violence, a history of abuse, gang participation, abuse of alcohol or drugs. The

chances triple if the juvenile also possess these additional risk factors: uses a weapon, has been arrested, has a neurological problem that impairs thinking and feeling, has a record of low school grades and poor attendance.

The Assessment of First-Time Offenders: A Four-Part Schema

A longitudinal study conducted by the Orange County, California Probation Department (Schumacher, 1994) yielded an effective, easy to administer, prediction instrument when screening first-time offenders as potential chronic offenders. Data were collected on more than 3,000 juvenile offenders who entered the Orange County juvenile justice system for the first time during the first six months of 1985 and 1987, respectively. The cohort was tracked for 6 years to determine the overall volume of offenses committed and to examine differences among those juveniles who either commit just one offense (acute) versus those who become low-rate (two or three total offenses) or become chronic (four or more total offenses) reoffenders. The study showed that after 3 years, 71% of the juveniles did not reoffend; 21% of the juveniles committed one or two additional offenses, and that eight percent of the juveniles committed at least three additional offenses during the study period. These eight percent accounted for fifty-five percent of the repeat offenses committed by the three subgroups in total.

An analysis of intake data of chronic reoffenders taken at the time of their first offense was used to create a risk assessment profile that could be applied to future first-time offenders. The analysis showed that those first-time offenders who ultimately became chronic reoffenders, scored affirmative for two or more of the factors depicted in Table 1 at the time of their first offense (An affirmative to any sub-measure constitutes an affirmative for that factor).

Table 1. Orange County, California Probation Department's Assessment Factors

Risk Factor	Sub-measures
School behavior/performance factor	Attendance problems (i.e., truancy) Behavior problems (i.e., suspensions or expulsion) Poor grades (i.e., failing one or more classes)
Family problem factor	Poor parental supervision and control (parents do not know where the juvenile goes, what he or she does, or with whom, and have little or no influence in such matters) Significant family problems (i.e., illness, substance abuse, recent trauma, major financial problems, marital/family discord or other significant stressors)
Substance abuse factor	The use of drugs or alcohol in any way but experimental
Delinquency factor	Stealing pattern of behavior A runaway pattern of behavior Gang member or associate

The profile was subsequently field tested against a study sample from the 1987 cohort. When administered to the then first-time offending juveniles, the instrument is reported to be 70% accurate at predicting chronic juvenile reoffenders. The instrument produced false positives at a rate of 19% and false negatives at a rate of 11%. With juveniles ages 15 and younger the instrument proved more accurate, rising to a 77% prediction rate (with older juveniles it fell to 64%). The instrument was also field tested specifically on a population that would presumably have a large sample of chronic and more serious first-time offenders. Using 905 first-time wards of the court as a sample, in 66% of the cases the instrument correctly identified chronic, low rate, or nonrecidivists.

This test produced false positives at a rate of 28% and false negatives at a rate of six percent (Schumacher, 1994).

As a consequence of the information revealed by the Orange County, California Probation Department's longitudinal study (Schumacher, 1994), the State of California restructured their juvenile justice system. Resources at the disposal of the juvenile justice system have been refocused and aimed at potential repeat-juvenile offenders. Efforts at prevention and earlier intervention for those juveniles who fail to meet the profile are now the responsibility of the local community.

Versions of the new California juvenile intervention model, referred to as "The 8% Solution" in reference to the eight percent of juveniles that commit the majority of delinquent acts, is now employed in a number of states. Florida, in an effort to implement the "get-tough" model of juvenile justice, began instituting new juvenile justice policies based on their vision of "The 8% Solution" on July 1, 2000. However, the Florida model forgoes the assessment of first-time juvenile offenders. Like the California model, Florida requires the local community to provide intervention resources for juveniles not yet labeled chronic reoffenders, while the state concentrates on the chronic "8%" by allocating resources to long-term detention facilities.

Parallel to the work of Schumacher and Kurz (1994) was OJJDP's development of their Delinquency Prevention Works program (Hurley, 1995). Theory-based rather than empirical, this program's effort reached many of the same conclusions of Schumacher and Kurz with respect to establishing key risk factors. Since 1995 OJJDP has refined their risk assessment model and incorporated protective factors (Morley et al., 2000). The OJJDP risk assessment model is depicted in Table 2.

Table 2. OJJDP Risk Assessment Model

Risk Factor	Sub-measures	Protective Factors
Communities	Availability of drugs Availability of firearms Community laws/norms favorable to drug use, firearms, and crime Media portrayals of violence Transitions and mobility Low neighborhood attachment Community disorganization Extreme economic deprivation	Clear and consistent standards for prosocial behavior that are widely and frequently communicated
Family	Family history of problem behavior Family management problems Family conflict Favorable parental attitudes toward their involvement in problem behavior	Healthy beliefs Clear and consistent standards for prosocial behavior
School	Early and persistent antisocial behavior Academic failure beginning in elementary school Lack of commitment to school	
Individual	Alienation and rebelliousness Friends who engage in a problem behavior Favorable attitudes toward the problem behavior Early initiation of the problem behavior Constitutional factors	Prosocial bonding with family members, adults outside the family, and low-risk peers Opportunities for meaningful involvement in positive activities Skill-building activities Rewards for positive contributions

Theories of Delinquency

Chronologically, the dominant theoretical traditions within criminology include, but are not limited to labeling theory, social- and self-control theories, social learning and subcultural theories, and restorative justice theory. Hirschi's (1969) social control theory

constitutes the theory most dominant among these traditions. However, over the past decade restorative justice theories constitute the emerging challenge to Hirschi's theory and the approach most germane to issues of moral development.

Labeling Theory

Built upon the work of Tannenbaum (1938) and reintroduced by Becker (1963, 1964), labeling theory presumes that after an individual commits a deviant act the label placed upon her/him coerces the individual deeper into that deviant role. Proponents of this theory argue that as a consequence of society's tendency toward labeling individuals with terms such as "known felon" and "parolee," opportunities to interact in a prosocial manner are closed off, ensuring that the only new behavioral alternatives available to the individual labeled "criminal" would be deviant ones. Hence, driven by society toward succeeding episodes of criminal behavior, the individual's concept of self eventually becomes congruent with society's and is that of a "criminal." Hence, labeling theory takes a social constructionist perspective. Crime is a category, defined in law by those with the power to criminalize behavior and is relative to cultures, historical period, social status, and context. Thus, proponents of the theory (Einstadter & Henry, 1995) argue that when attempting to modify deviant behavior the emphasis should be placed on diversion, rehabilitation, restitution, and reparation rather than punitive social controls such as monitor collars or shock incarcerations.

Labeling theory has been called less a theory than a factor in predicting future deviant behavior (Akers, 1994). As reported by Akers (1994), labeling theory, as a theory, has obvious limitations: not the least of which is the failure to support its central proposition with empirical evidence. In addition to failing to address the genesis of

deviant behavior, it would be naive to think that offenders would not be labeled as such by the system.

Social Control Theory

Based on the work of Travis Hirschi (1969), social control (or bonding) theory emphasizes the bond of the individual to society as the primary operative mechanism. Hirschi identifies four components to the bond: (a) emotional attachments to significant others, (b) a commitment to appropriate life-styles, (c) involvement in conventional values, and (d) a belief in the "correctness" of social obligations and the rules of the larger society. If any one of these components weakens, social control weakens and the likelihood of deviance increases. These components can be applied to juveniles as follows: (a) attachment to her/his parents is exemplified by close parental supervision, discipline, good communication, and an affectional identification with her/his parents; (b) attachment to peers is exemplified by affectional identification with and respect for the opinions of close friends; (c) commitment to school is exemplified by good grades and aspirations; (d) involvement in conventional values is exemplified by the avoidance of premature adult behaviors; (e) belief in social rules and obligations is exemplified by respect for the law and, though not specifically mentioned by Hirschi, participation in religious activities (Akers, 1994). Belief in social control centers on the endorsement of general conventional values and norms, particularly the belief that laws and society's rules in general are morally correct and should be obeyed (Hirschi, 1969).

Social control theory has been the dominant theory of criminal and delinquent behavior for the past 30 years. It is the most frequently discussed and tested of all theories in criminology (Akers, 1994; Einstadter & Henry, 1995). Yet the theory has detractors. Hirschi contends that the juvenile's *attachment*, or lack thereof, to parents

and peers determines whether the juvenile will participate in deviant behavior. However, critics of Hirschi's theory note that juvenile deviant behavior is most strongly linked to the *behavior* of the juvenile's peers and parents rather than levels of attachment (Akers, 1994; Einstadter & Henry, 1995). The aforementioned criticism implies that learning theories may provide a more relevant approach when addressing this issue.

Social Learning Theory/Subcultural Theory

Subcultural theory is based on Merton's (1938, 1957) theory of anomie, which predicts that the greater the discrepancy between aspirations and expectations within a given community, the higher the probability of law violation. In turn, social learning theory has its origins in Sutherland's (1947) "differential association" theory, which emphasized that these same communities may not be so much disorganized as organized around different values and concerns (Akers, 1994). Over time, these theories have become intertwined and associated closely with behavioral and cognitive psychology. In fact, much the current theory is based on the work of Bandura (1977; Bandura & Walters, 1963) rather than Merton or Sutherland.

Akers's social learning theory (Akers, 1985; Burgess & Akers, 1966) focuses on how the individual's interacts within their social environment. These interactions, particularly within the individual's subcultural group, are seen as the major source of behavioral reinforcement. Akers's theory describes the learning of knowledge, skills, rationalizations, and justifications that enable or facilitate deviant behavior by defining it as favorable or desirable. More cognitive versions of Akers's theory recognize the indirect nature of role modeling through identification with television and film (Einstadter & Henry, 1995).

Critics of the social learning theory argue that the theory falsely assumes that the individual is passive and unintentional, therefore ignoring both the individual's receptivity to learning deviant behavior and the ability to project the consequences for such behavior. Critics such as Mischel and Mischel (1976) claim that individuals inherently develop cognitive schema (contingency rules) that guide their behavior. This self-regulation operates in the absence of and sometimes in spite of immediate external situational pressures. Thus, critics argue that this social learning theory better explains how deviant behaviors are taught and transmission rather than its purpose or origins (Einstadter and Henry, 1995).

Self-Control Theory

Hirschi, in collaboration with Gottfredson (1990), expanded their notion of control theory in an effort to present a unified general theory of criminology to explain all deviant behavior. Defined as self-control theory, it contends that individuals effectively socialized as children will exhibit high self-control and will be substantially less likely at all periods of life to engage in deviant acts (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). In turn, persons with low self-control are thought to be ineffectively or incompletely socialized as children, have developed no stake in conformity, and are insensitive to the feelings of others. Hence, they have no reason not to deviate from the norm. Therefore, circumstances or opportunity constitute the most significant modifier in self-control theory. For example, robberies are committed when the robber feels she or he can make a quick gain and escape the scene.

Restorative Justice Theory

The development of a restorative justice theory is credited to Umbreit (1985, 1995) and Bazemore (Bazemore, 1992, 1997, 1998; Bazemore & Umbreit, 1992).

Concurrent with the development of restorative justice theory, Braithwaite (1989, 1990, 1999) introduced his theory of reintegrated shaming. Over time, the work of these three theorists have been synthesized into the singular concept of restorative justice. This concept is less an explanation of why crimes occur than an application of theory-based consequences when addressing criminal behavior (Cragg, 1992; Fatie, 1995). In fact, Braithwaite (1989) contends that the theory is not new but rather an originality of synthesis that incorporates the key variables of social control theory, self-control (opportunity) theory, subcultural theory, learning theory, and labeling theory. This new paradigm attempts to establish degrees of responsibility rather than absolutes. It recognizes differences between the potential and the actual realization of human freedom, recognizes the influence of social context without denying personal responsibility, and views accountability as taking responsibility rather than enduring punishment (Umbriet, 1995).

Restorative justice has also been viewed as a reaction to society's failed attempts to use institutional punishment as an effective deterrent to deviant behavior (Braithwaite & Pettit, 1990; Ellis & Ellis, 1989). Those who adhere to the theory of restorative justice note that low-crime societies are those that foster a sequence of shaming, forgiveness, and repentance and give more prominence to *community-based*, moralizing social control rather than *institutional-based*, *punitive* social control (Braithwaite & Pettit, 1990). Braithwaite claims that Western society has gone too far at professionalizing punishment and that there has been an uncoupling of the community's responsibility to deter deviant behavior. Quoting Braithwaite (1989), "I am saying that the rule of law will amount to a meaningless set of formal sanctioning proceedings, which will be perceived as arbitrary

unless there is community involvement in moralizing about and helping with the crime problem" (p. 8).

In short, the restorative justice paradigm is the reintroduction of moral education into the process of administering justice. With respect to justice, Schweigert (1999) argues that the restorative justice paradigm administers moral learning whereas proceeding theories administered punishment:

Restorative justice is an ecological experiment, building on naturally occurring dynamics of conflict, support and accountability to foster moral learning. Indeed, restorative justice reforms constitute an ecological experiment in moral education as well as in criminal justice. To the ecological cultivator, this living laboratory of interventions presents an opportunity to learn how to see clearly where the potential for moral learning is greatest and how to cultivate this potential with greater ecological respect and educational effectiveness. (p. 180)

Most of the restorative justice advocates came to the approach as a result of persistent empirical evidence of the failures of the therapeutic/welfare and retributive/justice models to effectively address juvenile crime. Consequently, while advocates argue for applying the approach to all crime, most of the writing on restorative justice focuses on the comparatively small crimes of juvenile delinquents. Braithwaite (1999) states

Juvenile justice. . . is seen as seesawing back and forth during the past century between a justice and a welfare model. Between retribution and rehabilitation. Restorative justice is touted as a long-overdue third model . . . a way of hopping off the seesaw, of heading more consistently in a new direction while enrolling both liberal politicians who support the welfare model and conservatives who support the justice model. The appeal to liberals is a less punitive justice system. The appeal of restorative justice to conservatives is its strong emphasis on victim empowerment, on empowering families (as in "family group conferences"), on sheeting home responsibilities, and on fiscal savings as a result of the parsimonious use of punishment. (p. 4)

When applied to juveniles, restorative justice is a sequential process whereby the community directly expresses its disapproval of the juvenile's behavior to the juvenile;

accepts responsibility for administrating consequences; and then provides the juvenile an opportunity to be reaccepted into the community. Restorative justice is not an effort to stigmatize the juvenile. "Disapproval is dispensed without eliciting a rejection of the disapprovers" (Braithwaite, 1989, p. 102). Rather, the restorative justice paradigm attempts to rebuild integrity within the social unit and places considerable emphasis on the issues of moral development and interdependency. As stated by Braithwaite (1989),

shame operates at two levels to affect social control. First, it deters criminal behavior because social approval of significant others is something we do not like to lose. Second, and more importantly, both shaming and repentance build consciences which internally deter criminal behavior even in the absence of any external shaming associated with the offense. Shaming brings into existence two very different kinds of punishers - social disapproval and pangs of conscience. (p. 75)

Braithwaite (1989) argues that the process is all the more effective (detering) when administered by persons who continue to be important to the delinquent. Furthermore, the severity of any sanction is less a predictor of therapeutic effectiveness than the social embeddedness of the sanctions:

The families and organizations that are effective at crime control will not be those that are most punitive, but those that sustain communitarian bonds, that secure compliance by expressing disapproval while maintaining ongoing relationships characterized overwhelmingly by social approval. Shame is used to internalize a commitment to the rules instead of punishment being used to tip the balance of rational calculation in favor of compliance. (p. 139)

Braithwaite (1989) claims the best place to see reintegrative shaming at work is in loving families. Within this context efforts to correct the juvenile's deviant behaviors are not done in isolation from the rest of their relationship with the family; nor does it permanently change the status of juvenile from "child" to "criminal child." Rather, corrective measures are imposed within a framework of reconcilable and mutually supportive interests. Braithwaite emphasizes that if the juvenile is constantly fearful and

insecure in their relationship with their parents, the withdrawal of approval (shaming) will not succeed in establishing corrective behaviors.

Table 3. Delinquency Theory Process—Outcome

Theory/Theorist(s)	Process	Outcome
Labeling/ Tannenbaum (1983) Becker (1963, 1964)	Social Constructionism; juvenile categorized and treated as a criminal	Concept of criminal-self becomes congruent with societies; opportunities to interact limited to deviant acts
Social Control/ Hirschi (1969)	Weakened attachments to society	Fails to endorse conventional values and norms
Social Learning/ Bandura (1977) Akers (1985)	Interactions with social environment in a negative manner	Overcome by deviant behavioral reinforcements
Self-Control/ Hirschi & Gottfredson (1990)	Ineffectively or incompletely socialized, mediated by circumstances or opportunity	No stake in conformity; insensitive toward others
Restorative Justice/ Braithwaite (1989) Umbriet & Bazemore (1992, 1995)	Failure to provide community-based, moralizing social control	Absence of moral reasoning and interdependency

As illustrated in Table 3, each subsequent theory of delinquency creates a more inclusive explanation of the development of delinquent behavior and more aggressively addressed the individual's abilities to project the consequences of their behavior. Furthermore, over time theorists in criminology attempted to incorporate the individual's, the family's, and the communities' responsibilities to each other in shaping the juvenile's prosocial values, and in determining their inclination to engage in criminal behavior (Braithwaite, 1989, 1999; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2000). In turn, recent views from mental health professionals promote the need for a multivariate, ecological approach in the understanding, prevention, and intervention of

juvenile delinquency. This approach was first modeled by Bronfenbrenner (1979) and acknowledges the diverse explanations for delinquency (Garbarino, 1999; Henggeler, 1991, 1996; Schumacher & Kurz, 1994; Yoshikawa, 1994). Four factors used to predict chronic delinquent behavior that have been extracted from ecological approaches are disrupted families, school failure, drug and alcohol abuse, and peer group delinquent behaviors (Espelage et al., 2000; Henggeler et al., 1998; Schumacher & Kurz, 1994; Zagar et al., 1991).

The Correlates of Delinquency

Moral Reasoning

If there is an a priori within the field of criminology it is the belief in the all but direct correlation between the level of a juvenile's moral reasoning and the likelihood of avoiding delinquency (Braithwaite, 1989; Grossmann, 1996; Hirschi, 1969; Kohlberg, 1958, 1976; Nessel, 1998; Springer, 1996). Quoting Hirschi, (1969, p. 26) "[T]he less a person believes he should obey the rules, the more likely he is to violate them." In fact, Lawrence Kohlberg, the most prominent figure in the field of moral development, argued that to know the good is to choose the good (Kohlberg, 1981). Over time a body of experimental evidence has accumulated that indicates lower levels of moral reasoning for juvenile offenders (Alcixio & Norris, 2000; Henggeler & Borduin, 1990).

Taylor and Walker (1997) found that stage two levels of moral judgment dominated the 101 institutionalized juvenile delinquents assessed for moral reasoning. Kohlberg's stage two reasoning, where concern for consequences is limited to self and self-talk examples such as "No one cares, so why not," is more compatible to delinquent behavior than stage three reasoning when concern for consequences expands to include members of the like group. In fact, this consistent finding of stage two moral reasoning

within the population may constitute the best behavioral correlate to Kohlberg's theoretical model. In turn, Garbarino (1999) found that the most violent juvenile offenders stand mostly at stage 1 of Kohlberg's classification. According to Walker's reviews (Walker, 1999; Walker & Hennig, 1999), explanations as to why juveniles would remain stuck at stage two reasoning are linked to the juvenile's parental experience. He found that the families of such juveniles offer a context replete with unpleasant and/or physical reactions to behavior, low levels of affective bonding, or parental disengagement.

Efforts to enhance moral reasoning within the general juvenile population have been successful. Prosocial or character education programs have existed in the nation's schools from their conception and continued to be employed (Battistich et al., 1991; Rest et al., 1999b). Youniss and Yates (1999), in an analysis of longitudinal studies where youth participated in community service, consistently found that such participation resulted in later adult moral-civic activism. In keeping with Erikson's (1968) notions of development, the authors contend that moral actions lead to moral identity. This in turn leads to further moral actions and subsequent solidification of moral identity.

Specific efforts to enhance the moral reasoning of juvenile delinquents were made by Taylor and Walker (1997). One hundred and one institutionalized young offenders were paired off and subsequently participated in one hour per day of group and dyadic discussions of moral dilemmas over a 30-day period. It was found that when one member of the pair had a higher moral reasoning/peer status than the other the participant with the lower moral reasoning/peer status experienced a significant increase in moral reasoning over the course of the intervention.

The authors have described the process as "disequilibrium" (Walker & Taylor, 1991): "Disequilibrium is engendered by exposure to higher-stage reasoning or by experiences of cognitive conflict. Such experiences challenge ways of thinking, revealing their inadequacy, and thereby stimulate development toward a more equilibrated stage" (p. 264-265).

Toward this end, many diversion programs are now being developed and implemented with the specific intention to strengthen prosocial values and enhance the development of moral reasoning. Teen Courts, an example of Braithwaite's (1989) theory of reintegrative shaming, may be the most noteworthy example of this effort. Juvenile Teen Court defendants are sanctioned by their peers for their delinquent behavior and in the process exposed to other teenagers with higher moral reasoning/peer status. Further, Teen Court sanctions require hands-on participation in prosocial activities (Godwin, 2000).

Braithwaite (1989) claims that the best place to see the enhancement or facilitation of prosocial values (reintegrative shaming) at work is in loving families not diversion programs. Within this context, efforts to correct the juvenile's deviant behaviors are not done in isolation from the rest of their relationship with the family nor does it permanently change the status of juvenile from "child" to "criminal child." Rather, corrective measures are imposed within a framework of reconcilable and mutually supportive interests. However, Braithwaite emphasizes that if the juvenile is constantly fearful or insecure in their relationship with their parents, the withdrawal of approval (shaming) will not succeed in establishing prosocial behaviors. Hence, when efforts are made to addressing moral reasoning within the juvenile, family process must also be addressed.

Braithwaite's (1989) claim is supported by the work of Berkowitz and Grych (1998) who identified the parenting processes related empirically to the behaviors associated with the development of moral reasoning in children. They found that induction, defined as "When parents take the time to explain their behavior to their children and show awareness of how that behavior affects the child (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998, p. 382)," may be the single most powerful parental influence on children's development of moral reasoning.

Parental Moral Reasoning

Addressing the relationship between the parent's level of moral reasoning and the child's level of moral reasoning have been limited to a handful of studies with weak and inconsistent correlations typically reported. Walker and Taylor (1991) explain,

The real limitation of this approach, however, is that it simply assesses whether the moral reasoning competence of parents relates to that of the child, without indicating how parents actually reason with their child regarding moral issues. It is parents' moral reasoning *performance*, not their competence, that may be crucial in their children's development. (p. 265)

Damon (1988, 1995) specifically emphasizes the primary roles that parents and teachers play as moral educators of children. Damon (1988) emphasizes a respectful engagement that would include consistent expectations, guidelines, and clearly explained mature insights, as a condition to effective moral parenting. Damon draws a correlation between the parent's level of morality and that of their children. He contends that the parent's own moral example in relating to their children can offer "a magnificent moral education in and of itself," (Damon, 1995, p. 187) and suggests that it is at least as important as what is actually taught to them. However, in the few studies conducted, many of those doctoral dissertations, parent's level of moral reasoning has not been found to be a predictor of their children's level of moral development. Rather, the

parent's level of moral reasoning in conjunction with their style of parental functioning were reported to be significant predictors of children's level of moral reasoning development (Dunton, 1989; Holstein, 1972; Parikh, 1980; Powers, 1982; Walker & Taylor, 1991). These studies on parenting revealed that supportive parental responsiveness, psychological differentiation, and parental discussion styles that involve Socratic (inductive) questioning and expose the child to higher levels of moral reasoning serve to enhance moral development within the child. These techniques, when effectively administered, have been referred to as an authoritative parenting style.

Powers (1982) investigated the relationship among family interaction, parental moral judgment development, and adolescent moral judgment development. Her database consisted of two groups of families: 27 families with a psychiatrically hospitalized adolescent and 32 families with a nonpatient adolescent. All the families were intact and background variables of socioeconomic status, education, and religion were controlled within the study. Siblings were not included in the study, and the mean age of the adolescents studied was 14.5 years of age.

No correlation was found between parental moral judgment development and adolescent moral judgment development. However, other analyses of the relationships among family members indicated that parenting style influenced the adolescent's moral judgment development. In general, for both mothers and fathers, parents that maintained family environments that were supportive (i.e., affect stimulating behaviors), challenging, and focused served as a positive predictor of adolescent moral judgment development. Conversely, those behaviors that interfered with these processes (i.e., avoidance, distortion, rejection, and affective conflict) were negative predictors of adolescent moral judgment development

In a related longitudinal study, Dunton (1989) investigated parental practices associated with their children's moral judgment development, including the relationship between parents' and children's level of moral reasoning. She also examined the psychological characteristics of adolescents and adults who displayed the highest levels of moral reasoning. Subjects were recruited from families with children in nursery schools or elementary schools within the Berkeley area. Data on parental and child beliefs and behaviors were collected from over 100 families when the children were between the ages of three and four, nine and ten, and fourteen and fifteen, as part of the Family Socialization and Developmental Competence Project at UC Berkeley. Dunton reported that parental responsiveness, psychological differentiation, and demandingness were positively related to high levels of moral reasoning in children, and restrictive parenting was associated with lower levels of such reasoning. However, Dunton reported few significant relationships between the parents' and the children's levels of moral reasoning. The only significant correlations in parent and child moral reasoning were reported for 9-year-old girls and their fathers, and between 14-year-old boys and their mothers.

In a comprehensive 2-year longitudinal study, examining the parent's role, Walker and Taylor, (1991) examined the contribution of parent's level of moral reasoning in predicting the child's level of moral reasoning. Participants included 53 family triads (mother, father, and child) with the children in grades one through ten. Families were recruited from the general population and defined as "generally well-functioning families" (p. 280). Families were evaluated while discussing both a hypothetical and a real-life dilemma, using Kohlberg's (Colby & Kohlberg, 1983a, 1983b) Moral Judgment Interview and Powers' (1982, 1988) Developmental

Environmental Coding System. The analysis of the data revealed no significant relationships between parent's and children's level of moral reasoning, between parents' interaction styles and their level of moral reasoning, between children's interaction styles and their level of moral reasoning, as well as no significant gender differences. However, the researcher did report that parental level of moral reasoning interacted or combined with their discussion style as a significant predictor of their children's moral reasoning development over the subsequent 2-year interval.

The parental discussion style that most strongly predicted the development of moral reasoning was characterized by "Socratic" questioning (e.g., eliciting the child's opinion, asking clarifying questions, paraphrasing, and checking for understanding), affective support, and efforts to present information to the child above their current level of moral reasoning. Conversely, parents that relied on operational and informative discussion styles, whereby the child is more likely to be given unilateral direction rather than engaged in conversation, facilitated relatively little developmental growth of moral judgment in the child.

Parenting Style

Debate exists within the larger field of human developmental theory regarding the role that parents play in their child's socialization and subsequent development. Such debate ranges from those that place substantial emphasis on the role of family to the counter-intuitive work of Judith Harris (1998), who argues exclusively that children socialize children, to Robert Wright (1994) who argues from the controversial evolutionary sociology perspective: "[T]he question may be whether, after the new Darwinism takes root, the word *moral* can be anything but a joke" (p. 326).

A more central position regarding the family's influence is articulated in the work of Smetana (1999). She argues for a social domain theory whereby children construct different forms of social knowledge, including morality, through their social experiences with both their peers and their parents, teachers, neighbors, and siblings. Smetana states that children's conflicts over moral issues occur primarily in interactions with peers. Such conflicts are often resolved without adult intervention and form the primary experiential basis for the construction of social knowledge. However, children do not live in a world without adults. When adults do respond to moral breaches and conflicts the research indicates that adults typically focus on the victim's perspective and the evaluations of rights by stimulating the child to think reflectively about their actions. Further, that these adults' responses are at a slightly higher level of moral judgment development than the child's. Thus, serving to stimulate the child's moral judgment development.

With respect to parenting specifically, most of the theoretical models focus on three sets of variables: emotional support, parental control, and consistency (Cusinato, 1998). These variable sets, as first conceptualized by Baumrind (1971), are manifested in three different parenting styles: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive (Baumrind, 1971; Gardano, 1998). Elements of the authoritative parenting style include freedom within limits, effective communication, and high maturity demands placed on the children. Authoritarian parents are demanding, highly controlling, uncommunicative, and affectively cold and hostile. The permissive parenting style is at the opposing end of the continuum from the authoritarian parenting style. These parents practice either a *laissez-faire* approach to parenting or are simply neglectful. Regardless, permissive parents exercise little parental control and set few demands for mature behavior (Baumrind,

1971, 1980; Berkowitz & Grych, 1998; Gardano, 1998). A substantial body of research supports the notion that the authoritarian parenting style is significantly more effective in facilitating the development of moral reasoning in children and most likely to produce children with positive personality characteristics (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998; Pratt & Diessner, 1994; Smetana, 1999; Walker & Hennig, 1999).

In turn, parents that exhibit predominately permissive parenting styles (e.g., poor boundaries, confused communication, a lack of shared intentions, stereotyped family process, despair, cynicism, and denial of ambivalence) are associated with both juvenile delinquency and lower levels of moral development within the child (Dunton, 1989; Beavers, 1985, 1990; Holstein, 1972; Walker & Taylor, 1991). Authoritarian parenting is also associated with the negation of the development of moral reasoning within the child (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998; Pratt & Diessner, 1994; Smetana, 1999; Walker & Hennig, 1999).

Baumrind's (1991) longitudinal study, the Family Socialization and Developmental Competence Project (FSP) best exemplifies these research efforts. The original population of Caucasian, middle-class parents and their children were drawn from 13 nursery schools in the Berkeley and Oakland, California area. Parents were classified by teams of observers as authoritarian, authoritative, or permissive. A social competence instrument, developed by the researchers and administered throughout the study, was used to evaluate the children. The children were assessed and placed into one of three categories: (a) socially incompetent, (b) partially socially competent, and (c) optimally competent. At Time Two ($n = 164$, average age = 9 years), no child raised by an authoritative couple was found incompetent. Furthermore, no child raised by a permissive couple was found optimally competent. At Time Three ($n = 139$, average age

= 14.5 years), children were again evaluated for competence and administered an additional test battery. Researchers found that authoritarian parents were effective in deterring problem behavior but that their children did not generally participate in prosocial behaviors. The behaviors of children with authoritative parents were strongly associated with social responsibility and optimum competence.

Key to Smetana's (1999) understanding of the parent's influence in the child's moral judgment development is the role of affect. She reports that the quality of the parent-child bond, particularly parental warmth, involvement, and support are also related to moral judgment development. Noting that, "affective reactions are an inseparable aspect of children's experiences of transgressions, and social interactions regarding moral rules, rule violations and conflicts" (p. 315), Smetana claims that there are optimal levels of affective arousal. For example, "Too much emotional arousal leads to self-oriented, aversive emotional reactions rather than other-oriented reactions such as sympathy" (p. 315). Smetana (1999) offers that parents most effective in influencing their child's moral judgment development, whom she labels authoritative versus authoritarian or permissive,

drew clear boundaries between moral, conventional, and personal issues in ways that were consistent with domain-theoretical expectations. These parents clearly distinguished moral and conventional regulations, but they were also responsive to the child's needs for an area of personal control and choice, treating personal issues as adolescents' personal prerogatives. At the same time, they treated friendship and multifaceted issues, defined as issues containing both conventional and personal components (such as the child's room, which can be seen as either the child's personal territory or part of the household) as conventionally regulated. (p. 318)

The Role of Familial Factors in Moral Development

Common to most theories of criminology, and congruent with current multivariate, ecological approaches, is the belief that a child's family is the agent

primarily responsible for inculcating prosocial values in their children (Henggeler et al., 1992; Henggeler et al., 1998; Mann et al., 1990; Nugent et al., 1993). These theories are depicted in Table 4.

Table 4. Familial/Parental Factors Associated with Enhancing Moral Development

Author	Positive Factors
Baumrind (1971, 1980)	Authoritative parenting style (freedom with limits, effective communication, high maturity demands placed on the child)
Powers (1982)	Affect stimulating behaviors (supportive, challenging, and focused)
Damon (1988, 1995)	Respectful engagement (consistent expectations, guidelines, and clearly explained mature insights)
Walker & Taylor (1991)	Affective support, "Socratic" discussion style (eliciting the child's opinion, asking clarifying questions, paraphrasing, and checking for understanding), and (presenting information above their current level of moral reasoning)
Berkowitz & Grych (1998)	Induction (parents explain their behavior and how it affects the child)
Cusinato (1998)	Emotional support, parental control, and consistency
Smetana (1999)	Authoritative, affect (parental warmth, involvement, and support) and Social Domain Theory (parents' role: focus on victim's perspective, stimulate reflective thinking, and respond at a slightly higher level of moral reasoning)

Furthermore, while family members are those primarily responsible for socializing the child (Akers, 1994; Einstadter & Henry, 1995), other social contexts, particularly schools, function as reinforcers of the family's efforts and provide formal social controls where the family fails (Einstadter & Henry, 1995).

This current perspective is profoundly different from the original premise held by prominent theorists in the field of moral judgment development. Piaget (1932/1965) and Kohlberg (1969), two of the most prominent figures from the previous generation of developmental theorists, proposed that the hierarchical nature of the parent-child relationship at best was inconsequential and at worst constrained the child's moral judgment development (Walker & Hennig, 1999).

The majority of theorists in the field of moral development now hold positions closer to those of Walker and Taylor (1991):

Parents may play an influential role in their children's moral judgment development, in contradiction to views implied by cognitive-developmentalists such as Piaget and Kohlberg. . . [Further] . . . the nature of these parental interactions is seemingly different from those provided by a peer context. (p. 281)

The aforementioned conclusion is supported by three recent investigations that relied on juvenile self-report measures. In a survey of 10,000 high school seniors, Steinberg (1990) found that adolescents who rated their parents as firm, democratic, and accepting were more self-reliant, reported less anxiety and depression, and had a lower risk of delinquent behavior. Steinberg also found that ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and family structure had no moderating effects.

Zern (1997) reports on data collected over 15 years measuring the extent to which adolescents (ages 12 to 22; $n = 2863$) believe that young people should receive guidance on moral issues and from whom. The adolescents report that family members have a greater impact than schools, clergy, peers, or any single individual. Results showed a minimal difference in ratings among genders, age groups, and calendar years.

Hart et al. (1999) recently analyzed the longitudinal data supplied by the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (Child Sample). The sample consisted over 650 children

born to a representative sample of American women who were between the ages of 14 and 21 in 1979. The authors reported that family influences had a direct effect on the child's moral identity development in adolescence. Further, the authors found that family influence was independent of the effects of personality or socio-economic status.

In fact, family disruption or dysfunction is one of the factors that appear with regularity in much of the theorizing about causes of delinquency (Maguire et al., 1997). Quoting the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Morley et al., 2000),

Family dysfunction is an equally important predictor of delinquency. The delinquency that results from dysfunctional family functioning often begins a vicious cycle that in which a youth's delinquent behavior leads to negative parental reaction, thus exacerbating the child's misbehavior and introducing a cycle that is both cause and effect. (p. 82)

Based on Kumpfer's (1994) review of studies for Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, family correlates of delinquency are poor socialization practices, poor discipline skills, poor parent/child relationships, excessive family conflict and marital discord, family chaos and stress, poor parental mental health, and family isolation. Hamburg and Takanishi (1998) of the Carnegie Corporation offer an explanation for many of these correlates:

Throughout most of human history, small communities provided durable networks, familiar human relationships, and cultural guidance for youth people, offering support in time of stress and skills necessary for coping and adaptation. In contemporary societies, these social support have eroded considerably through extensive geographical mobility, scattering of extended families, and the rise of single-parent families, especially those involving very young, very poor, and socially isolated mothers. (p. 825)

Henggeler (1989) reviewed 65 studies over a 30-year period that addressed the relationship between family transactions and child psychosocial functioning. The author concluded that minimal levels of parental control strategies may be the key source of delinquent behavior. Or, if parental controls are present, but are inept or ineffective,

juveniles in these families are also at risk for delinquency. Finally, the antisocial behaviors of parents, including the acceptable use of deviant methods to meet goals, are strong predictors of delinquent behavior in young family members.

Beavers (1990) defined families with children who exhibited chronic delinquent behavior as severely dysfunctional. Such families experience a major and pervasive absence of coherent structure and leadership. Parental efforts to provide structure to parent-child interactions have been abandoned. Consequently, there is an absence of both individual and dyadic boundaries. The concept of "family" is tenuous or nonexistent and members have adopted an "each person for himself" attitude. While with optimal families members take responsibility for their actions both inside and outside the family environment, these less functional families avoid and/or displace responsibility. Under these circumstances, dysfunctional families commonly blame others or attack the accuser. For example, verbal signs of avoidance include speaking in third person or in plurals (e.g., "everyone else does . . ." or "all husbands . . ."). More significantly, while optimal families acknowledge that members make mistakes but contend that such members should not be punished for acknowledging personal responsibilities for those mistakes, the opposite is true in dysfunctional families (Beavers, 1990; Wolber & Banze, 1998).

Walker (1999; Walker & Hennig, 1999) concluded that in dysfunctional families moral reasoning and moral behavior by necessity are focused upon the self. Children within this family context of disharmony and blighted hope find themselves presented with few opportunities to develop an understanding of the norms associated with loyalty to the group, concern for the expectations of others, or disapproval of that which hurts others. Henggeler and Borduin (1990) note that a high number of juvenile delinquents are

at Stage 2 of Kohlberg's (1976) developmental typology. At the Kohlbergian Stage 2 level of moral development the individual is primarily concerned with the gratification of their own needs, where as at Stage 3, the individual is more concerned with social conformity, approval, and meeting the expectations of others.

Theory and Methods of Assessment of Moral Reasoning

Neo-Kohlbergian Theory of Moral Judgment Development

Most if not all contemporary thought regarding the development of moral judgment is based upon the work of Lawrence Kohlberg (1958) who, in turn, expanded upon the work of Jean Piaget (1932/1965). Piaget (1932/1965) was one of the first to study the changes in the level of moral reasoning that accompanied changes/stages in cognitive development. For example, Piaget postulated that the young child's primitive moral judgment is the result of egocentric thought tendencies and their necessary position of unilateral respect for adults. In time, the child's moral judgment becomes more mature as their relation to adults becomes closer to that of mutual respect while concurrently the child comes into contact with new social institutions and points of view. Pertinent to understanding Kohlberg's developmental theory of moral judgment is an understanding of Piaget's stages of logical reasoning or intelligence. Piaget (1967) contended that after an individual has mastered speech they experience three sequential stages of cognitive development: the intuitive stage, the concrete operational stage, when the individual, still a child, understands inferences, classifications, and quantitative relationships about concrete things, and the formal operational, when the individual, by now an adolescent, understands abstractions and the testing of hypotheses. Kohlberg uses a stage model similar to Piaget's in outlining his theory of moral judgment development and relies upon Piaget's stage theory of general cognitive development to establish the perimeters of

stage advancement in his moral judgment development model. Quoting Kohlberg, (1976),

Since moral reasoning clearly is reasoning, advanced moral reasoning depends on advanced logical reasoning. There is a parallelism between an individual's logical stage and his moral stage. . . . Many individuals are at a higher logical stage than the parallel moral stage, but essentially none are at a higher moral stage than their logical stage. (p. 32)

Lawrence Kohlberg (1958, 1976, 1981) and his cognitive development tradition of research in moral judgment development identifies morality with justice and asserts that there are six basic problem-solving strategies that people can use in making moral judgments. These strategies can be characterized in terms of six basic concepts of justice. The six concepts (outlined below) are believed to be developmentally sequential with the earlier concepts or stages, logically simpler and the later stages more complex elaborations of the former. The stages progress from reasoning governed by fear of authority (preconventional stages one and two) to concern for others and society (conventional stages three and four), to concern for humanity and universal rights (post-conventional stages five and six). As defined by Kohlberg (1976, p. 34-35) the stages and brief descriptions are depicted in Table 5.

According to Kohlberg, moral judgment development continues to progress into adulthood and toward stage six thinking. However, he contends that only a few individuals are capable of achieving stage six thinking, and then typically not until they have reached their late twenties. Kohlberg's stages formed a universal and nonregressive sequence of development. Hence, once the individual reaches a particular stage of moral judgment development they no longer apply strategies learned from previous stages.

Researchers in recent years have challenged Kohlberg's developmental theory of moral judgment. Neo-Kohlbergian (or contemporary) approaches to moral judgment

Table 5. Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

Level	Stage	Content of Stage
Preconventional	Stage 1	Heteronomous morality—Egocentric point of view. Avoid punishment and the superior power of authorities. Obedience for it's own sake
	Stage 2	Individualism/Instrumental Purpose/Exchange—Concrete individualistic perspective. To serve one's own needs while recognizing that others have their own interests as well. Right is what is fair, quid pro quo.
Conventional	Stage 3	Mutual interpersonal expectations, relationships, and conformity—Perspective of the individual in relationships with other individuals. Belief in the Golden Rule. Desire to maintain rules that support stereotypical good behavior. Living up to role expectations.
	Stage 4	Social system/Conscience—Differentiates societal point of view from interpersonal agreement or motives. Takes the point of view of the system that defines roles and rules. Keep the institution going as a whole to avoid the breakdown of the system. Fulfill duties to which you have agreed. Laws are to be upheld except in extreme cases.
Postconventional	Stage 5	Social contract/Utility and individual rights—A prior-to-society perspective. Considers moral and legal points of view; recognizes that they sometimes conflict and finds it difficult to integrate them. A sense of obligation to law because of one's social contract. Aware that people hold a variety of values and opinions, that most values and rules are relative to your group. Some nonrelative values and rights (such as life and liberty), however must be upheld in any society and regardless of majority opinion.
	Stage 6	Universal ethics principles—Perspective of a moral point of view. The belief as a rational person in the validity of universal moral principles and a sense of personal commitment to them. Following self-chosen ethical principles. When laws violate these principles one acts in accordance with the principle.

development incorporate gender (Gilligan, 1982; 1998) and cultural issues (Halstead, 1999; Rudy et al., 1999b) not initially addressed by Kohlberg. Further, neo-Kohlbergian theorists (Rest et al., 1999b) tend to define cognitive structures in terms of schemas rather than linear stages and expand the focus of Kohlberg's work to include the individual's actualization of moral judgment development.

Foremost in these challenges is the fact that Kohlberg's research is based on development in men only. As reported by Gilligan (1982), Piaget's account of the moral judgment development of children, accorded females four brief entries. In Kohlberg's theory "females simply do not exist" (Gilligan, 1982, p. 18). Gilligan (1982) argues that Kohlberg has failed to factor differences among genders with regard to their images of relationships and their concepts of self. Gilligan (1982) asserts that women also view morality in terms of how it affects interpersonal relationships not just in terms of fairness and justice as prescribed by Kohlberg. While avoiding an us-versus-them position, Gilligan argues that women are concerned with the rights and needs of others more than men who are often more concerned with individualistic terms and abstract principles of justice. Specifically, women work toward changing rules in order to preserve relationships while men depict relationships as more easily replaceable. Consequently, Gilligan (1982) is concerned when Kohlberg claims universality in his six-stage scale of measuring moral judgment development. It appears to Gilligan that females are less likely to transition from Kohlberg's stage three (where morality is conceived in interpersonal terms and goodness is equated with helping and pleasing) to stage four (where relationships are subordinated to rules) or stage five and six (where rules are subordinate to universal principles). These unexposed viewpoints regarding differences

between men and women can be practically illustrated with the issue of abortion. Quoting Gilligan (1998),

I remember being struck by the realization that women were constructing the dilemma in a way that was completely at odds with the public conversation. Then, as now, the public discussion of abortion was framed as a conflict between the right to life and the right to choice, raising the question of whose rights took precedence in a formula that pitted the fetus against the mother (according to the right-to-lifers) or women against men (according to pro-choicers). Yet women were saying, "I'm in this dilemma of relationship, and I can't see any way of acting that will not cause hurt." (p. 130)

Thus, moral judgment development, as measured against established androcentric life-cycle stages, has previously been classified as deviant or less evolved than the so-called normal, or men's, stages that focus on stages of increasing separation as the measure of successful development. Gilligan identifies themes that focus on attachment, interdependence, and situational thinking experienced by the females she studied, as opposed to prominent themes of individual rights and either/or thinking that was voiced by many males.

Numerous studies and articles (Woods, 1996) have been published since Gilligan's work concluding that there are no significant differences in the way the sexes make moral judgment decisions. However, in support of Gilligan's assertions, more recent moral theorists (Rest et al., 1999b) also see the elements of social constructs and relativism playing an important role in understanding moral judgment development. Gilligan (1982) concludes, in her now classic work *In a Different Voice*,

As we have listened for centuries to the voices of men and the theories of development that their experience informs, so we have come more recently to notice not only the silence of women but the difficulty in hearing what they say when they speak. Yet in the different voices of women lies the truth of an ethic of care, the tie between relationship and responsibility, and the origins of aggression in the failure of connection. The failure to see the different reality of women's lives and to hear the differences in their voices stems in part from the assumption that there is a single mode of social experience and interpretation. By positing

instead two different modes, we arrive at a more complex rendition of human experience which sees the truth of separation and attachment in the lives of women and men and recognizes how these truths are carried by different modes of language and thought. (p. 82)

Other post-Kohlberg theorists (Bersoff, 1999; Boyes & Allen, 1993; Rest et al., 1999b) criticize Kohlberg's failure to explain discrepancy between the level of an individual's moral judgment and their subsequent moral action. Simply put, why will an individual proceed in ways morally correct (as defined by Kohlberg) yet sometimes not? As an explanation, critics claim that Kohlberg's approach was too focused on macro-morality (concerns for the formal structure of society, as defined by institutions, rules, and roles) and failed to adequately address micro-morality (concerns for the face-to-face relations that people have in everyday life). Such criticisms have particular relevance with regard to defining moral judgment both during adolescence and when considering gender. As has been previously discussed, feminist theories give special attention to the morality of intimate relationships (micro-morality over macro-morality). With respect to adolescence, it is the period of time when the individual discovers that people are related through institutions, role systems, and rules (i.e., "The System" or macro-morality). However, in addition to "the system," the adolescence comes to the realization that their peer group (the micro-morality) plays a very important part in their life experience. Consequently, in addressing the question how is morality actualized, neo-Kohlbergians (Pritchard, 1999; Rest et al., 1999b) attempt to place an equal emphasis on macro-morality and micro-morality and in the process argue for a four-component model of morality. As outlined by Bebeau and Thoma (1999), these include the following: moral sensitivity (the ability to interpret the situation as moral), moral judgment (the ability to judge which available actions are most justified), moral motivation (the ability to

prioritize the moral action over other significant concerns), and moral character (the ability to construct and implement actions that service the moral choice). Selman (1976) reminds us that

Stages of cognitive and social-cognitive development will become as sterile (and probably as abused) as IQ points if the structural level of an individual's judgment is taken as a product, rather than understood as a process of social reasoning within the broader context of a given *individual child's* social experience. (p. 316)

An additional challenge concerns the Kohlbergian view of stages. Current neo-Kohlbergian thinking (Rest et al., 1999b) emphasizes the notion of schemas rather than stages. In the moral judgment development context, schemas can be thought of as behavioral responses contingent upon concrete past experiences, while stages are more abstract responses based on awareness. Neo-Kohlbergians presume that people make sense of moral situations in terms of three developmentally ordered schemas: personal interests (Kohlberg's stages two and three), which first develops in childhood; maintaining norms (Kohlberg's stage four), which first develops in adolescence; and postconventional thinking (Kohlberg's stages five and six), which typically develops in adolescence and adulthood. Unlike the static "staircase" stages of Piaget or Kohlberg that transpire upward one step at a time, neo-Kohlbergians' argue that a more accurate model allows for upward movement in terms of a gradually shifting distribution of preferences toward higher ordered moral reasoning. Neo-Kohlbergian's claim that the "staircase model" does not account for the fact that the individual typically has multiple ways of thinking about most phenomena.

The schema perspective, as outlined in Table 6, suggests that change involves shifts in the frequency with which the individual relies on concept-driven ways of moral thinking. (Rest et al., 1999).

Table 6. Neo-Kohlbergian Stages of Moral Development

Schema	Elements of the Schema
Personal Interests	First develops in childhood. Presociocentric behavior whereby the individual is concerned with the immediate consequences afforded themselves or those that hold with the individual personal affectionate relationships (Kohlberg's stages two and three).
Maintaining Norms	First develops in adolescence and adulthood. Belief in society-wide, uniform norms; reciprocity at the expense of insuring equitability; and an orientation toward duty that presumes "law" and "order" are irrevocably connected (Kohlberg's stage four).
Postconventional	Typically develops in adolescence and adulthood. Believe that moral obligations are based on shared ideas, which should be fully reciprocal, open to debate, and based on the experience of the community (Kohlberg's stages five and six).

Still other post-Kohlberg theorists (Berkowitz & Grych, 1989; Walker, 1999; Walker & Hennig, 1999) are concerned with Kohlberg's position with regard to the influence of the family environment on moral judgment development. Walker (1999) notes, "Throughout the last generation of moral development theory and research, the family has not received adequate conceptual or empirical attention as a significant context for children's moral development" (p. 261).

While the failure to consider the family unit as influential on moral judgment development precedes Kohlberg's work, it too distinguishes Kohlbergian from neo-Kohlbergian efforts. Piaget (1965) claimed that parents tended to be authoritarian and consequently inhibited moral reasoning, whereas the egalitarian perspective of peers fostered moral reasoning. Hence, this focused the field's efforts away from the family and toward the greater community (Berkowitz & Grych, 1998). Walker (1999) claims that with respect to human development, the contradiction between the field of moral

development's disinterest in the family as context and the other social sciences' emphasis of the family as context "reflects [Kohlberg's] pervasive liberal optimism of the time—hoping that out of egalitarian interactions among naive children there would arise, *ex nihilo*, moral insight and maturity" (Walker, 1999, p. 261). Walker's assertions are supported by Kohlberg's research focus: the Israeli kibbutz system and his "just community" projects within schools and jails. Others such as Powers (1988) argue,

Kohlberg clearly sensed the importance of distinguishing the role of the family in moral development in cognitive developmental theory from its role in social learning and psychoanalytic theories. Thus, in order to clarify the cognitive developmental position, the family influence on moral judgment development was forcefully de-emphasized in early explorations of the impact of social environments on development. (p. 210)

Assessment of Moral Reasoning

Berkowitz and Grych (1998) remind us that moral reasoning does not exist spontaneously, and disconnected from the larger core of what constitutes healthy psychology. Rather, a child's moral development is integrated with other aspects of that child's psychological make-up. They offer as an example, "To be morally effective one needs self-control. However, self-control can also support criminal or sadistic behaviour" (Berkowitz and Grych, 1998, p. 372).

Goodman (1998) discussed the value and dangers of assessing the moral development of children. She identified powerful reasons to resist the introduction of moral language into psychological assessments such as (a) the negative effects of labeling, (b) the increased risks of subjectivity, and (c) the substitution of "illness" for what are in fact social and cultural differences. However, in defense of assessing children, Goodman (1998, p. 478) noted "this domain should not be singled out." In fact, evaluating intellectual and behavioral deviations are the norm. Yet, these activities

continue to carry many of these same risks of labeling, subjectivity, and multicultural concerns. She noted six advantages gained by assessment, which included (a) enhancing one's understanding of self, in particular one's moral identity; (b) offering an alternative set of values to consider and aspire towards; (c) creating a better understanding of moral justification of children (e.g., the ability to distinguish among the child who steals out of principle, in defiance of principle, or without principles); (d) heightening teachers' awareness through the introduction of moral language and concepts; (e) more fully engaging parents into the discussion of their child's moral framework; and (f) increasing the likelihood that children will be raised with an operative morality while decreasing the need for adult surveillance and punishment.

Testing instruments that measure the degree of moral development include the Defining Issues Test or DIT (Rest, 1979). This test is derived from the work of Lawrence Kohlberg and the cognitive development tradition of research in moral reasoning (Rest & Narvaez, 1991). Participants are given six hypothetical stories, patterned after the Kohlberg dilemmas, and 12 items that represent crucial issues or important concerns for someone making a decision about the hypothetical story. Participants are asked to rate and rank the items. On the basis of how the items are rated and ranked a developmental score is calculated.

A variety of scores result from the DIT. Most consistent with the Kohlbergian stage theory of moral development is the DIT's "D" score. The D score is a composite index score measuring the extent to which the participant gives high ratings to high stage items and low ratings to low stage items. Hence the D score locates the participant in terms of a continuous number representing the developmental continuum of moral development. However, the most frequently used is the "P" ("Principled" moral thinking)

score. The P score (range 0-91, $M = 39.1$, $SD = 14.84$) indicates the extent to which the participant considers stages five or six (postconventional thinking) as most important. Hence, individuals with higher DIT scores are more likely to exhibit prosocial behaviors.

Theory and Assessment of Family Functioning

Family Systems Theory

Family systems theorists vary in how they view family dynamics yet the theorists also share many core beliefs (Cheston, 2000). Most theoretical models that describe and classify family functioning focus on similar familiar tasks: problem solving, organization, and emotional climate. The extent to which family members are able to effectively perform these tasks while interacting and adapting to change determines global family health and competence (Knudson-Martin, 2000). Of the core beliefs, the cornerstone of family systems theory, is the presumption that each family member's behavior is interconnected with those of each member of the family and that as a system must interact in harmony to insure effective functioning. Thus, detecting transactive regularities make it possible to detect familial variables and associated parenting styles (Scabini & Cigoli, 1998). Toward the end of identifying and quantifying family functioning, family system theorists have developed a number of theoretical models and associated assessment devices. Of particular interest is the Beavers Systems Model (Beavers, 1990).

Beavers Family Systems Theory

The Beavers Systems Model of Family Functioning (Beavers, 1990) shares many complementary characteristics with other respected models (Olsen & DeFrain, 1997). However, unlike the other models, the Beavers System Model has a substantial clinical genesis. Quoting the authors (Beavers & Hampson, 1990), "The Beavers Model

incorporates clinical observations of healthy/competent versus dysfunctional families in treatment and research settings across a 25-year period with clinically relevant interpretations of systems theories" (p. 12).

The Beavers Model provides a continuum to define family functioning based on their degree of health/competence, conflict, cohesion, directive leadership, and emotional expressiveness. The associated assessment device (the Beaver's Self-Report Family Inventory or SFI) report to measure those qualities found by moral judgment development researches to effect outcomes.

Table 7. Beavers Model of Family Functioning (Health/Competence Dimension)

	Centrifugal Dimension	Mixed Dimension	Centripetal Dimension
Severely Dysfunctional	Often sociopathic offspring		Often schizophrenic offspring
Borderline	Often borderline offspring		Often severely obsessive offspring
Midrange	Often behavior disorders	mixed	Often neurotic offspring
Adequate		adequate	
Healthy			

According to the Beavers classification system families can be divided into five states: healthy, adequate, midrange, borderline, and severely dysfunctional. Five percent of the families could be considered optimal, approximately 75% of the families could be considered midrange, and 19% could be considered dysfunctional (Beavers & Hampson, 1990). The continuum of family functioning is divided into five classifications: (a) *Optimal* with the qualities of capable negotiation, respect for individual choice and

ambivalence, warmth, intimacy, and humor; (b) *Adequate* defined as families with relatively clear boundaries, the ability to negotiate but with pain and ambivalence reluctantly recognized, and some periods of warmth and sharing interspersed with control struggles; (c) *Midrange* defined as families with relatively clear communication, a consistent effort at control when "loving" also means controlling, elements of anger and/or anxiety/depression, and ambivalence is handled by repression; (d) *Borderline* defined as families that shift from chaotic to tyrannical control efforts, where boundaries fluctuate from poor to rigid, elements of depression and distancing, and outbursts of rage; and (e) *Severely Dysfunctional* with the qualities of poor boundaries, confused communication, lack of shared attentional focus, stereotyped family process, despair, cynicism, and denial of ambivalence.

Beavers also sees various styles of functioning within the family, which may be unrelated to adaptation or competence (Beavers, 1990). Beavers defines these styles as centripetal and centrifugal. Centripetal families view the familial as a source of pleasure, joy, and satisfaction, regardless of whether these emotions are actually facilitated by the family or not. When the style is taken to the extreme, clinical descriptors used to describe individuals in these type families, would include the terms enmeshment and undifferentiated. Parents that practice an intense centripetal style run the risk of instilling excessive "breakaway guilt" within their children and inhibiting their self-determination. Centrifugal families look outside the family in search of pleasure, joy, and satisfaction. When taken to the extreme, the centrifugal style family may have individuals within the family clinically described as disengaged or neglected. Parents that practice an intense centrifugal style run the risk of pushing their children into a premature, unprepared autonomy.

Beavers (1990, p. 36) reminds us that "competent families are able to accomplish subtle shifts in style during the course of normal family development." For example, as the children reach adolescence families typically have the need to shift their style toward the centrifugal perspective, as the children develop their own independence and require less direct care giving. However, the family that maintains a rigid perspective and becomes stuck with one style, denotes a diminished family competence.

Promising Intervention Outcomes

Promising Research with Community-Based Approaches

Some types of first-time diversion programs have consistently proven their effectiveness (Butts & Buck, 2000; Howitt, Moore, & Gaulier, 1998). These diversion programs have in common a more aggressive approach when addressing the needs of victims; they incorporate the community within the treatment approach, and emphasize the moral issues associated with the offense. In turn, these programs fall within the paradigm of restorative justice.

While still a relatively new approach, studies consistently report lower recidivism with the victim mediation approach when compared to control groups processed through the courts (Braithwaite, 1999). The intervention involves a conference or mediation among affected parties—normally the juvenile offender(s), the victim(s), their respective support groups and/or parents, and interested members of the community. The parties meet face to face to talk about the crime, express their concerns, and work out a restitution plan. The process requires that the offender assume concrete rather than abstract responsibility for the crime, provides the victim a greater opportunity to heal, provides the offender a greater opportunity to reconnect to societal norms, and places responsibility into the hands of families and communities (Bazemore, 1998).

Stillwater Minnesota's Victim-Offender Conferencing Program typifies one of the Nation's victim mediation programs. The program is administered by Washington County's Court Services/Probation agency. With a \$60,000.00 budget, the program consists of one paid staff member and over 50 volunteer mediators. The program conducts mediation conferences at the diversion and postdisposition stages in the justice process. In 1996, approximately 70% of the cases referred to the program were mediated. Of those mediated 99% resulted in written agreements, and 99% of the agreements were completed. Sixty percent of the cases were felonies with 175 juvenile cases and 25 adult cases.

Paralleling the victim mediation approach was the use of school-based mediation to resolve conflicts in schools. Often referred to as peer mediation, outcomes associated with the approach hold promise that juveniles can be taught effective ways to resolve conflict. A school based peer mediation program in Orange County, North Carolina exemplifies the value in the use of this approach. During the 1992-1993 school year, nine teachers and 391 sixth-graders were taught conflict resolution skills. Twenty-six students were subsequently picked as peer mediation facilitators and were responsible for addressing conflicts among students. By year's end, when compared to the previous school year, referrals to the principal for disciplinary reasons dropped from 150 to 27 (87%), in-school suspensions decreased from 52 to 30 (42%), and out-of-school suspensions decreased from 40 to one (97%). Note that while outcomes from this project were significant it is not known whether this decreases represented specific disciplinary actions or all kinds of actions (Powell, Muir-McClain, & Halasyamani, 1995).

One of the fastest growing types of early intervention programs in the nation is the teen court. The program, based on the principles of restorative justice, is designed

specifically to address first-time juvenile offenders but has also been shown to work effectively with the more serious juvenile delinquents (Williamson, Chalk, & Knepper, 1993). Teen courts, with typical 1-year recidivism rates under 15% and as low as 4.6%, have been referred to as a wider, stronger, different net (Williamson et al., 1993). Teen court programs hold young people accountable for offenses that, under the traditional justice or disciplinary system, are often seen as receiving "slap on the wrist" types of responses (Nessel, 1998). In fact, teen court juries tend to be tougher on defendants than juvenile court judges while perceived as fair by the defendants. Williamson et al. (1993) evaluation of Kentucky's Teen Court programs offers the example of two Teen Court defendants who appealed their referral to the program and their subsequent sanctions. One juvenile's sanctions were lowered from 105 hours of community service, mandatory participation in five Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and Teen Court jury duties, and a 2-month curfew, for the charge of public intoxication to a \$50 fine and 60 days of probation. A second juvenile, charged with carrying a concealed weapon, received 90 hours of community service, mandatory Teen Court jury duties, and a 1-month curfew. On appeal, the second juvenile's sanctions were lowered to a \$50 fine and Teen Court jury participation. In addition, when compared to the traditional juvenile court system, which relies on too often overburdened case managers, the program is more effective in monitoring juvenile case dispositions or sentencing completion (Williamson et al., 1993). Further, it is argued (Godwin, 2000; Williamson et al., 1993) that the Teen Court defendant's mandatory participation on subsequent Teen Court juries sentencing fellow defendants, minimizes any labeling of defendants.

Rod Hissong's (1991) evaluation of a teen court program in Arlington, Texas matched offenders sentenced by the teen court with nonteen court participants who had

contemporaneously committed similar offenses. From a sample of 392 predominately white teenagers over a period of 24 months, the research found that only 25% of the individuals who participated in teen court had recidivated by the end of the study, while 36% of the teenagers not involved in teen court had recidivated. Jones (1994) in her 1994 evaluation of the Santa Rosa Teen Court indicated among her measured outcomes a reduction in recidivism among the target population. During the 18-month period of evaluation, only 2.5% of the 238 teen court referrals were reported as reoffenders. Wells and Minor's (1997) evaluation of Kentucky's teen court program assessed teen courts in several sites around the state. They also report finding a reduced likelihood of recidivism among those juveniles that completed the teen court program. Bay County, Florida found their program was a cost-effective way to lower recidivism and provide a valuable tool for law enforcement (Zehner, 1997). An evaluation of the Alachua County Teen Court Program (Giunta, 1998, 2000; Rowe, 1997) reveals a 4.6% 1-year recidivism rate and a 11.4% 3-year recidivism rate.

Of those teen court programs with published evaluations, only the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts' report on teen court programs in North Carolina (Drennan, 1995) found no difference in the tendency to recidivate between teen court participants and the preprogram control group. However, this study suffers from one glaring methodological flaw: there was not an equivalent group of juveniles comprising the control group. Rather, the control group consisted of juveniles who had more serious charges (e.g., possession of a weapon, possession of a controlled substance).

Promising Research on Family-Focused Interventions

Efforts to address juvenile delinquency within the context of family functioning have centered on the use of multi-target ecological treatments. Often referred to as

Multisystemic Therapy (MST) the approach uses a family preservation model of service delivery. Treatment objectives focus on empowering the juvenile, and their family members by facilitating the development of resources and skills while incorporating other central social relationships outside the family. In keeping with this approach, services are often delivered in real-world settings (e.g., at home, in school) (Morley et al., 2000).

An extraordinary example of the MST approach can be found in Orange County, California's Youth and Family Resource Center (YFRC) model for chronic juvenile offenders. Intervention partners, housed in one facility, included deputy probation officers and case managers; educators; both an on-site and an in-home mental health teams consisting of clinical psychologists, MSWs, MFTs, and substance abuse counselors; a nurse practitioner; administrative support staff; and program volunteers. Services provided the families run the spectrum of educational, mental health and medical health needs and include cultural, recreational, and social activities.

Each YFRC serves 100 juveniles and their families. The average length of time that the juvenile and their family participates in the program, including transitional services, is 18 months at an approximate cost of \$14,000 per family/year. In comparison, Orange County spends an average of \$44,000 per juvenile/year for custody costs alone in their traditional juvenile detention facilities. And unlike traditional juvenile detention facilities, the MST approach is a multi-targeted ecological treatment with a rippling effect that benefits the entire community.

Orange County began use of the YFRC in June of 1997; a series of funding problems delayed both its development and implementation. However, approximately midway through the program evaluation process, the YFRC approach appears to be on

the right track. When compared to the control group ($n = 53$) that was assigned to the regular field supervision unit, the experimental group ($n = 53$) receiving YRFC services had a lower recidivism rate. The majority of the experimental group (80%) had none or only one new petition for new law violations as compared to 57% of the control group. In addition, evaluators note increased school attendance, improved social skills, and reduced alcohol/drug use in the experimental group.

Borduin et al. (1995) compared the effects of home-based with office-based, individual, outpatient counseling in the treatment of almost 200 chronic juvenile offenders. An analysis of pre- to posttreatment outcome measures indicated positive changes in the level of family functioning. Recidivism rates were examined 4 years posttreatment. The juveniles of families that received multi-target ecological family therapy were significantly less likely to be rearrested (22%) than juveniles of families that dropped out of multi-target ecological family therapy (47%), received individual counseling (71%), dropped out of individual counseling (71%), or refused to participate in either treatment (88%).

These treatments include programs such as the University of Florida's project Back-on-Track (Myers et al., 1998). Juveniles participate with their parents or primary caregivers. Together they receive group and family mental health counseling services. The juvenile participates in empathy-building exercises and psychoeducational services. The approach was developed to target the multifaceted contributing factors to delinquent behavior (e.g., ineffective parenting techniques, impaired parent-child communication, negative peer influences, low self-esteem, and poor problem-solving skills). An evaluation of the Back-on-Track compared the first 30 juveniles that completed the program (mostly first offenders, $n = 16$; 53%) with a control group matched for age, sex,

race, and number of offenses. At the twelve-month follow-up, the number of juveniles who had reoffended was significantly higher in the control group.

Summary

One general conclusion can be drawn from the literature. Theories of delinquency, developmental theories of moral reasoning, and effective efforts at diversion intervention are all moving toward incorporating a multi-systemic, ecological perspective with a contextual framework that is centered on the family and the familial responsibility for developing the children's moral reasoning. Yet methods of assessment, both when screening referrals and measuring outcomes, fail to incorporate this conceptualization.

In fact there is little agreement regarding models of risk assessment when screening juvenile referrals. However, more recent efforts have focused on a four-part schema (school behavior/performance, family problems, substance abuse, and noncriminal delinquent behavior) that begins to parallel the work of theorists, researchers, and successful clinical experience. While there is some empirical support for this model, the test produced false positives at a rate 28% and false negatives at a rate of 6%. These prediction rates offer the possibility that the instrument has failed to capture the full construct and that inappropriate diversion placement may transpire as a consequence. Once again, as indicated by the literature review, the considerable influence that moral reasoning has on prosocial behavior would appear to be the variable missing from assessment models.

While the overall investigations of moral reasoning with juvenile populations indicate that the family plays the greatest role in developing the child's moral reasoning, the parent's level of moral reasoning in and of itself is not a predictor of their children's

level of moral reasoning. However, the parent's level of moral reasoning in relation to the degree of parental functioning constitutes a significant predictor of their children's level of moral reasoning. And while the level of moral reasoning for the general juvenile population has been empirically researched, no empirical literature regarding first-time juvenile offenders has been published.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to assess the influences of three familial variables and three demographic variables on the adolescent first-time offender's level of moral reasoning. In this chapter the research hypotheses, relevant variables, population, sample, data collection procedures, and data analytic procedures are described. Additionally, the instrumentation, and the study's limitations are discussed.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were investigated in this study:

- Ho1: There is no statistically significant association between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and the level of moral reasoning demonstrated by her/his parents.
- Ho2: There is no statistically significant association between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and the reported parenting style utilized by her/his parents.
- Ho3: There is no statistically significant association between the level of moral reasoning demonstrated by the adolescent and the reported level of family functioning.
- Ho4: There is no statistically significant association between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and her/his age.
- Ho5: There is no statistically significant association between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and her/his gender.
- Ho6: There is no statistically significant association between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and her/his family's socio-economic status.
- Ho7: There are no statistically significant associations among the adolescent's level of moral reasoning, the parents' level of moral reasoning, the parents' reported

parenting style, the adolescent's age, the adolescent's gender, the family's socio-economic status, and the family's level of functioning.

Delineation of Relevant Variables

Dependent Variable

The adolescent's level of moral reasoning, the dependent variable in this study, is defined as the basic conceptual framework that an individual uses to analyze social-moral problems and subsequently judge the proper course of action (Rest, 1986b). For the purpose of this study, and in accordance with the Kohlbergian line of research, this conceptual framework is categorized into a sequence of three levels of moral reasoning: preconventional (stages one and two), conventional (stages three and four), and postconventional (stages five and six).

The Defining Issues Test was used to assess this level by means of measuring the D score. The D score indicates the extent to which the participant gives high ratings to high stage items and low ratings to low stage items, therefore, locating the participant along a continuum of moral development when they analyze a social-moral problem.

Independent Variables

The following independent variables were assessed: the parents' level of moral reasoning, the parents' parenting style, the family's level of functioning, the adolescent's age, the adolescent's gender, and their socio-economic status.

Parents' level of moral reasoning. The parent's level of moral reasoning is defined as the basic conceptual framework that the individual uses to analyze a social-moral problem and subsequently judge the proper course of action (Rest, 1986b). For the purposes of this study, and in accordance with the Kohlbergian line of research, this conceptual framework is categorized into a sequence of three levels of moral reasoning:

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Perception of family functioning. The family's level of functioning is defined as their health/competence, as a unit, in effectively addressing conflict, and demonstrating cohesion, directive leadership, and emotional expressiveness. This conceptual framework is based on the theoretical dimensions of the Beavers' Systems Model of Family Functioning (Beavers & Hampson, 1990). The Beavers Self-Report Family Inventory (Hampson, Beavers, & Hulgus, 1988) was used to assess these competencies and to form a combined score of family health/competence.

Parenting style. Parenting style is defined as the individual's method of interacting with their children when addressing the issues of communication, limit setting, autonomy, conflict, cohesion, directive leadership, and emotional expressiveness. These conceptual frameworks are based on the theoretical work of Baumrind (1971; 1991), who classified parental styles as authoritative, passive/laissez-faire, or authoritarian. The Parental Authority Questionnaire (Buri, 1991), which directly reflects Baumrind's theory and terminology, was used to measure/categorize parenting style.

Age. Rest (1986a) reports that the principled moral thinking score of the Defining Issues Test typically increases as the adolescent progresses through the normal developmental stages.

Gender. Previous research has failed to address the adolescent's gender as a variable for consideration (Woods, 1996).

Family socio-economic status. Rest (1986a; Rest & Narvaez, 1991) reports that some variables associated with higher socio-economic status, as measured by the Hollingshead Two Factor Index of Social Position (1957), are also associated with higher levels of moral reasoning (higher principled moral thinking scores).

Population

While there is much more to discover regarding the personality characteristics of first-time adolescent offenders and whether those variables constitute predictors of future deviant behavior, basic demographic information and recidivism rates for the population of Florida's first-time offenders are available. Using Florida's 3-year longitudinal analysis of their 49,343 first-time juvenile offenders from their fiscal year 1992-93 as a source of this information produced the following picture (Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, 1998). The overwhelming majority (70.4%) of the juveniles are male; approximately two-thirds (64.1%) are white; the average age at first offense is 14.4 years of age. Most of the juveniles (63%) receive their first charge before age 16 and over one-third at or after age 16. The majority (64.2%) of these first offenses are misdemeanors with property misdemeanors (i.e., retail theft) the most frequent charge accounting for 38.6% of all first cases. Only 8.5% of the cases are violent felonies. Blacks (12.4%) are almost twice as likely as whites (6.4%) to have committed these violent offenses. Juveniles charged with felony drug offenses are the most likely to be transferred to adult court (6%). Most first cases (67.5%) are handled nonjudicially (diverted) and 55% of juveniles received no additional charges within a 3-year period.

Subjects

The data used in this study were collected from 103 adolescents and their families. All of the data collected were from families with adolescents involved in Florida's juvenile justice system as first-time offenders. Information was collected on adolescents' (and their families) whose ages ranged from 12 years old to 18 years old at the time of data collection. It should be noted that three adolescents who were included in the study were minors at the time of the offense but had reached their 18th birthday while still involved in the juvenile justice system for the related offense.

One hundred twenty-one families originally participated in the study; however, 18 of these families were subsequently excluded from the data analysis. One adolescent participant and family members who completed the questionnaires were not included in this study's final analysis sample because they were outside the ages identified to be studied. Eleven adolescent participants and their family members were not included in this study's final analysis sample because they failed to complete the questionnaires. Six adolescent participants and their family members who completed the questionnaires were not included in this study's final analysis sample because the questionnaires were completed incorrectly. Therefore, the sample analyzed for this study consisted of 103 adolescents and their families.

The sample approximated the demographics compiled by the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (1998) in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity. No attempt to stratify or classify subgroups of criminal offenses committed within the context of misdemeanor crimes was attempted. The rationale for this decision is based on the potential variability within each legal definition of each charge (e.g., degrees of intent within the context of retail theft). All participants were drawn from those adolescents who have previously

agreed to participate in the Teen Court process in lieu of adjudication in juvenile court. Specifically, for participants included in the sample, they meet the following criteria.

Geographic Location and Residential Setting

With respect to moral reasoning, residential area is presumed interconnected with SES and other variables. However, no systematic data are available on this variable (Rest, 1986a). Consequently, Teen Courts throughout the state of Florida were offered the opportunity to participate. It was decided that the sample for the study would be drawn from urban, suburban, or rural residential areas with at least twenty percent of the sample drawn from each of these types of residential areas.

Adolescent's Age

Adolescents were between the ages of 12 and 17 at the time of the delinquent act. On three occasions the adolescent committed the delinquent act immediately prior to their eighteenth birthday. Therefore, the age of the sample analyzed ranged from 13 to 18.

Adolescent's School Grade

The school grade of the sample analyzed ranged from 7th grade to college freshman. One adolescent had dropped out of high school and possessed a general education degree and was consequently shown as a senior in high school.

Adolescent's Race (Ethnic Identity)

Of the total sample, 75 parent participants identified their family as white. Twenty-one parent participants identified their family as black. The remainder of the parents identified their family as Hispanic.

Adolescent's Gender

There were 54 male adolescent participants and 49 female adolescent participants.

Socio-Economic Status

The socio-economic status (SES) of the sample analyzed ranged from lower class to upper class, where a maximum possible score for SES was five and the minimum possible score was one.

Developmental Variables

The sample excluded adolescents documented as developmentally delayed.

Age of Majority

Adolescents emancipated by court order or through marriage were excluded from the sample.

Parent Variables

For the purpose of this study, "parents" are defined as the primary/significant caregivers, as measured by actual time spent in physical contact with the adolescent, and reported by the parent(s) in the demographic questionnaire. A substantial proportion of the sample of participating families (28%) were headed by single parents. Data were collected from both single-parent and two-parent households.

Level of Offense

Only those adolescents charged with misdemeanor offenses were included in the sample.

Data Collection Procedures

Adolescents charged with their first misdemeanor offense by the office of the State Attorney or local law enforcement agencies that agree to participate in the Teen Court program were invited to participate in the study during the Teen Court intake process. The Teen Court intake process included an invitation to the adolescent and their parents to participate in the study. In this invitation parents were given printed

information explaining the study and its purpose. They were informed of potential risks and benefits as a result of their participation and given an opportunity to receive results of the study upon its completion. Study participants were asked to sign and return an informed consent form at which time the testing instruments were administered. An emphasis was placed on explaining to the participants that the information they supplied was held in confidence and that they had no obligation to participate. They were also advised that their participation (or their decision not to participate) in the study was neither a benefit nor a detraction from their child's participation in the Teen Court program.

All data utilized in the study were collected by Teen Court staff members, other than the researcher. A set of administrative guidelines was provided to the staff. Families were randomly assigned to the staff members for assessment. Each participant was given a separate, gender-specific packet of instruments (mother/father/adolescent), coded in the upper right-hand corner with the family number.

Each adolescent was asked to complete the Defining Issues Test, the Beavers' Self-Report Family Inventory, and the Parental Authority Questionnaire. To reduce the risk that the adolescent participants did not comprehend the questions posed or were unable to correctly record their responses, the assigned staff member read the individual questions to the adolescent and marked the answers when necessary.

Parents were asked to complete the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A). Each parent was then asked to complete the Defining Issues Test and offered the assistance of the assigned staff member at their request. Parents were asked to respond privately and not to discuss their answers with each other until all the surveys had been completed.

The instrument battery took approximately one hour to complete. The assigned staff member then collected the completed battery. The family, having completed the instrument battery, was provided compensation in the form of one credit hour toward the adolescent's community service sanctions.

Instrumentation

Defining Issues Test (DIT)

The Defining Issues Test or DIT (Rest, 1986a) is a 48-item test derived from the cognitive development theory of Lawrence Kohlberg with its emphasis on the influence of cognitive development on moral judgment (Rest & Narvaez, 1991). Kohlberg asserted that there were six basic problem-solving strategies that people use in making moral judgments and that these strategies can be characterized in terms of six basic concepts of justice. The six concepts are believed to be developmentally sequential with the earlier concepts, or stages, logically simpler and the later stages more complex elaborations of the former. Participants are given three hypothetical stories and asked to choose from a set of twelve alternative responses. These responses, which represent crucial issues or important concerns for making a decision about the hypothetical story, are patterned after Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning. Participants are asked to rate and rank the items. On the basis of how the items are rated and ranked a developmental score is calculated.

The DIT can be administered individually or in groups, orally or in writing. It has been administered to people from age 12 to late adulthood. The test was originally normed using a population of 123 individuals. Participants ranged in age from 16 to 56. Thirty eight individuals had a junior high school education, 24 had a high school education, 34 had a college education, and 27 individuals had some graduate school

education. Subsequent normative data analyses, using over 12,000 individuals, have resulted in a sample representative of a wide range of the United States' population.

The questions on the DIT are written at a ninth grade reading level. However, the test's author warns that some ninth graders may not understand the rating and ranking task (Rest, 1986a). Hence, the adolescent participants can be read the individual questions and the assigned staff member can mark the answers.

A variety of scores result from the DIT. Most consistent with Kohlberg's stage theory of moral development is the DIT's "D" score. The D score is a composite index score measuring the extent to which the participant gives high ratings to high stage items and low ratings to low stage items. Hence the D score locates the participant in terms of a continuous number representing the developmental continuum of moral development.

Studies show that formal education is the greatest predictor of higher D scores, consistently accounted for 50% of the variance (Rest, 1979; Rest, 1986b; Rest, & Narvaez, 1991). The instrument is all but gender neutral, with sex of subject accounting for .02 to .05% of the variance (Rest, 1986b; Rest et al., 1999b). There are over 400 published articles on the instrument and over 800 studies have been done using the DIT (Rest et al., 1999b). The DIT's D scores have a stable test-retest reliability (.70s to .80s). The Cronbach alpha for the D score ranged from the high .70s to the low .80s through 20 years of measuring the level of internal consistency (Rest et al., 1999b).

The work of Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, and Thoma (1999b) offers three solid reasons to accept the validity of the DIT. Most significantly, the DIT is a predictor of real-life moral behavior. Thoma, Rest, and Barnett (1986) linked the DIT score with delinquency and cheating. Rest and Narvaez (1994) linked the DIT to professional decision-making and job performance. Second, differentiated groups illustrated greater or

lesser expertise in moral reasoning. Case in point, the analysis of large composite samples indicated that high school students had higher scores than middle school students (Davison, 1979; Rest, 1979; Thoma et al., 1986). Further, significant upward changes were indicated in longitudinal studies. The findings from the DIT parallel the trends in Kohlberg's longitudinal data (Colby, Kohlberg, Gibbs, & Lieberman, 1983). For example, McNeel (1994) reported upward changes in scores as college students moved from their freshman to senior year. Third, there is evidence of a developmental hierarchy. The moral comprehension of the participants appears to be cumulative, with participants credited with understanding the stage four dilemma also have a higher comprehension of stages three, two, and one.

Beavers' Self-Report Family Inventory (SFI)

The Self-Report Family Inventory (Hampson et al., 1988) or SFI (Version II) is a 36-item self-report instrument designed to evaluate each family member's perception of the family's systematic functioning. Each family member is asked to complete the SFI individually without collaboration from other family members.

The SFI is based on the Beavers' Systems Model of Family Functioning. The factors measured are congruent with those obtained from the observational instruments and theoretical dimensions of the Beavers System Model (Beavers & Hampson, 1990). Specifically, the instrument measures the family's health/competence, conflict, cohesion, directive leadership, and emotional expressiveness. These factors, in turn, collapse into two second-order dimensions of health/competence and style.

The SFI's norms are based on data collected from two nonclinical samples of college students ($n = 279$ and $n = 205$) and from a sample of 71 families who had previously been in treatment. The test manual does not indicate a specific reading level

for the instrument. However, research with the instrument indicated a high degree of convergence between independent observer ratings and the ratings of the family's children (Hampson, Hulgus, & Beavers, 1991).

When used in conjunction with the observational ratings of the Beavers Interactional Competence Scale and the Beavers Interactional Style Scale (Hampson, Beavers, & Hulgus, 1989), longitudinal self-report scores are significantly correlated among family members (with the exception of adolescent scores when measuring family leadership). Internal consistency for the scale has been assessed at between .84 and .88 (via Cronbach's Alpha). Test-retest reliability for the SFI was assessed over 30-day and 90-day periods and based on a normal college sample ($n = 189$). Average correlations across time show adequate test-retest reliability for most scale factors, indicating adequate temporal stability, especially for the Health (average = .85) and Expressiveness (average = .81) dimensions. The SFI obtained a moderately high Canonical correlation ($r = .62$) with the Beavers System's observational ratings of Competence and Style. The pattern of results suggests that, on the whole, mothers tend to correspond most closely with external observers, followed by children ages 9-16, fathers, and children over 16 years of age. Research also indicates that members of more competent families show a greater variation of views than do members of clinic families.

The influence of social desirability, as measured by the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964), on responses to the SFI has also been investigated. Results indicate that responses on the SFI are not significantly related to giving socially desirable responses. In turn, the relationship between marital satisfaction, as measured by the Locke-Wallace Marital Satisfaction Scale (Locke & Wallace, 1959), and the SFI factors indicate that, when both parents' scores are combined, marital

satisfaction is significantly related to the family functioning dimensions measured by the SFI. The SFI also shows good convergence with other measures of family functioning, such as the FACES II (Olsen, Portner, & Lavee, 1985) and FACES III (Olsen, Russell, & Sprenkle, 1989).

Parental Authority Questionnaire

The Parental Authority Questionnaire or PAQ (Buri, 1991) was developed for the purpose of measuring Baumrind's (1971) permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parental authority prototypes. The PAQ is a 60-item (30 items per parent), Likert-type questionnaire. The instrument is administered to the parents' child and based on the assumption that "the actual parental behavior to which an individual has been exposed will largely affect that individuals in the way and to the extent that he or she perceives that behavior" (Buri, 1991, p. 111).

The 30 test items were derived from an original bank of 48 questions judged by 21 professionals from the fields of mental health and education as successfully capturing the three constructs. Responses to each item are made on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Thus, the PAQ yields three separate scores for each parent: permissiveness, authoritarianism, and authoritative. Scores on each of these variables range from 10 to 50 points; the higher the score, the greater the perceived level of the parental prototype measured.

Test-retest reliability and Cronbach coefficient alpha values are well within an acceptable level. When administered to a college level introductory psychology class, the test-retest reliability of the PAQ over a two week period yielded the following correlations for each of the six scales: .81 for mother's permissiveness; .86 for mother's authoritarianism; .78 for mother's authoritative; .77 for father's permissiveness; .85

for father's authoritarianism; .92 for father's authoritativeness. The Cronbach coefficient alpha values reported for the six variables were .75 for mother's permissiveness; .85 for mother's authoritarianism; .82 for mother's authoritativeness; .74 for father's permissiveness; .87 for father's authoritarianism; .85 for father's authoritativeness.

The PAQ has been demonstrated to possess discriminant validity. Subjects provide divergent responses to test items associated with the three parenting prototypes. Mother's authoritarianism was inversely related to mother's permissiveness and to mother's authoritativeness. In a like manner, father's authoritarianism was inversely related to father's permissiveness and to father's authoritativeness. In turn, mother's permissiveness was not significantly related to mother's authoritativeness and father's permissiveness was not significantly related to father's authoritativeness.

Baumrind's theory suggests a relationship between the authoritative parenting style and parental nurturance (Buri, 1989). The PAQ demonstrated criterion-related validity when bivariate correlations between the PAQ and the Parental Nurture Scale (Buri, Misukanis & Mueller, 1988) were obtained: authoritative parents were correlated highest for parental nurturance, authoritarian parenting was inversely related to nurturance, and parental permissiveness was unrelated to nurturance.

The PAQ has been exposed to limited norm testing. The PAQ's normative information was completed using two separate groups: 108 juniors and seniors from three different high schools (mean age = 17.4 years) and 171 college students (mean age = 18.8 years). The subjects in each of these groups came from intact families. The mean, mode, and standard deviations scores are higher for the college sample than the high school sample. The author does not provide the reading level of the instrument. Bivariate correlations between the PAQ and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale

indicated that none of the values were statistically significant, suggesting that the PAQ is not susceptible to social desirability response biases.

Demographic Questionnaire

A questionnaire was used to collect demographic information about the adolescent and her/his family (Appendix A). The following information was requested: adolescent's county of residence and residential description (urban, suburban, rural), family participant code, adolescent's age, adolescent's gender, adolescent's school grade, adolescent's ethnic identity, adolescent's relationship to current family members/caregivers, and the primary family members'/caregivers' level of education, occupation, and relationship to the adolescent.

Data Analytic Procedures

Multiple regression analyses were used to assess the relative contribution of six variables to predicting an adolescent first-offender's level of moral reasoning. The five variables were as follows: parent's level of moral reasoning, parent's parenting style, family's level of functioning, the family's level of Socio-economic status, adolescent's gender, and the adolescent's age.

CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Analysis Procedures

The purpose of this study was to assess the influences of three familial variables and three demographic variables on the level of moral reasoning of adolescent first-time offenders. More specifically, this research sought to determine the degree of relationship among the first-time offending adolescents' level of moral reasoning and the following familial variables: (a) the level of moral reasoning demonstrated by her/his parents, (b) the reported parenting style utilized by her/his parents, (c) the reported level of family functioning. Similarly, the degree of relationships was assessed among the adolescents level of moral reasoning and the following demographic characteristics: (a) adolescent's age, (b) adolescent's gender, and (c) the family's socio-economic status. In addition, this study assessed the combined strength of these variables in predicting the level of moral reasoning of these adolescents.

The data were collected from 103 adolescents and their families. All of the families had adolescents involved in Florida's juvenile justice system as first-time offenders. These families had chosen to participate in a diversion program, in lieu of the traditional method of appearing before a juvenile judge. Complete data sets were collected from 103 participating adolescents. Ninety fully completed data sets were collected from the mothers of the adolescent participants. Because only 28 fathers provided moral reasoning data, the study hypotheses were tested only on the moral

reasoning data collected from the adolescents' mother. However, analyses of the data from the sample of fathers were conducted when applicable.

Data for this study were analyzed through the use of the SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 10.1) computer program. Specifically, a multiple regression analysis was conducted and a series of Pearson product-moment correlations were computed to evaluate each of the seven originally stated hypotheses and determine if there were any significant relationships among the independent variables (see Table 8) and the dependent variable. In addition, a series of analyses were conducted comparing the means of subgroups of the study sample (e.g., male verses female), and the means of sample subgroups relative to norms from the general population.

Table 8. Description of Regression Predictor and Dependent Variable

Predictor Variable	Dependent Variable
Mother's Level of Moral Reasoning	Adolescent's Level of Moral Reasoning
Mother's Permissive Parenting	
Mother's Authoritarian Parenting	
Mother's Authoritative Parenting	
Level of Family Functioning	
Adolescent's Age	
Adolescent's Gender	
Family's Socio-Economic Status	

In addition, a series of analyses were conducted comparing the means of subgroups of the study sample (e.g., male verses female), and the means of sample subgroups relative to norms from the general population.

In order to determine levels of statistical significance, both when testing the originally stated hypotheses and during the post hoc analyses, the type I error rate was

established at .05 ($p < .05$), unless otherwise stated. This probability value was the basis upon which the null hypotheses were accepted or rejected.

Adolescent Moral Reasoning Level

The adolescent's level of moral reasoning, the study's independent variable, and the parents' level of moral reasoning were measured using the Defining Issue Test (DIT). The DIT provides a score based on the development of moral judgment ("D" score). This D-score indicates the extent to which the participant gave high ratings to high stage items and low ratings to low stage items, when determining possible outcomes to moral dilemmas. The adolescents' D-score constituted the dependent (continuous) variable. As measured by the DIT, the mean moral reasoning score for the sample of first-time offending adolescents was calculated to be 18 with a standard deviation of 3.86 (Table 9). The DIT scores of the adolescent study participants ranged from a maximum score of 28 (one adolescent) to a minimum score of 9 (two adolescents).

A one-sample t-test was conducted comparing the sample of first-time offending adolescents against published DIT norms for the same age group. The DIT test manual reports a mean score for the norm group of high school students of 19.48 with a standard deviation of 7.23. The results of the one-sample t-test indicated that the mean score for the first-time offending adolescents sampled in this study ($M = 18.00$; $SD = 3.86$) was significantly lower than that of the high school norm group score ($t = -4.015$, $p = .000$). This suggests that the population of first-time offending adolescents demonstrated a lower level of moral reasoning than adolescents of the same age within the general population.

Table 9. Descriptive Statistics of Continuous Variables

Instrument Item	Subscale Score	Ranges of Scores	Mean	Standard Deviation
Moral Reasoning	Parent's	8-31	19.72	4.34
	Mother's	8-29	19.81	4.40
	Father's	13-31	19.57	4.41
	Adolescent's	9-28	18.00	3.86
	Female	10-25	18.24	3.79
	Male	9-28	17.69	3.95
Parenting Style	Permissive	15.50-40.00	26.05	5.09
	Mother's	15-38	25.82	4.93
	Father's	14-44	26.81	6.84
	Authoritarian	22.50-49.00	34.62	5.21
	Mother's	19-48	34.15	5.86
	Father's	20-50	34.79	6.33
	Authoritative	20.00-48.50	36.10	5.09
	Mother's	20-47	37.22	5.40
	Father's	21-50	35.22	5.99
Family Functioning		2-9	4.96	1.41
	Female	2-9	5.08	1.57
	Male	3-8	4.85	1.27
Adolescent's Age		13-18	15.73	1.25
Socio-Economic Status		1-5	2.60	.92

Parent Moral Reasoning Level

The parents' moral reasoning level, as assessed by DIT, served as one of the independent (continuous) variables. The mean moral reasoning score for this sample of parents (both mother's and father's) of first-time offending adolescents was calculated to be 19.72 (SD = 4.34) with a maximum score of 31 (one parent) and a minimum score of 8 (one parent). Mother's mean score was calculated to be 19.81 (SD = 4.40) with a maximum score of 29 (three mothers) and a minimum score of 8 (one parent). Father's mean score was calculated to be 19.57 (SD = 4.41) with a maximum score of 31 (one father) and a minimum score of 13 (one father). It should be noted that t-test indicated no significant difference in DIT scores between mothers and fathers ($t = .705$, $p = .493$).

The DIT manual reports normative scores by educational levels (junior high school, high school, college, graduate school) rather than age. Therefore, for the purpose of this analysis, the mean score for the parent sample was compared with the published norms for two groups: (a) high school students in the general population and (b) college students in the general population. The parents from the sample of first-time offending adolescents had a mean score of 19.72 with a standard deviation of 4.34. The DIT test developers report a normative value for high school students of 19.48 for the mean, with a standard deviation of 7.23. A one-sample t-test indicated that the mean score for the parent sample was not significantly different ($t = .557$, $p = .579$) from the norm group score of high school students. Further, when the same adult sample was compared to normative values of college students' moral reasoning ($M = 25.41$; $SD = 7.80$), the mean score for this sample of parents was shown to be significantly lower ($t = -13.302$, $p = .000$). This indicates that the moral reasoning of parents of first-time offending adolescents is similar to that of high school students in the general population.

Parenting Style

The parenting style utilized by each parent was reported from the perspective of the adolescent and was assessed using the Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ). Three parenting styles were measured by the PAQ: permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative. This instrument assesses the extent to which each parenting style is employed. Consequently, three subscale scores, one for each parenting style, are obtained resulting in three continuous variables. As with the DIT D-score, only mother's parenting style scores were used in the analyses to test the hypotheses. The mother's permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative parenting subscale scores were each utilized as independent, continuous variables.

There were no significant associations found between mother's three parenting styles and the first-time offending adolescent's level of moral reasoning. Moreover, a Pearson, two-tail correlation analysis demonstrated that there was no relationship between the first-time offending adolescent's level of moral reasoning and the father's parenting style.

Family Functioning

The level of family functioning, as reported by the adolescent, was assessed by means of the health/competence score of the Beaver's Self-Report Family Inventory (SFI), and was incorporated into the analysis as an independent, continuous variable. The mean score for family functioning reported by these adolescents was calculated to be 4.96, with a standard deviation of 1.41 (see Table 9). The scores for this variable ranged from a maximum score of nine to a minimum score of 2. These scores fell within the published range of scores for the instrument, with 1 to 2 (the minimum score) defined as severely dysfunctional, and 9 to 10 (the maximum score) defined as optimally functioning. The distribution of scores for this sample appears in Table 10.

Mean scores for males and females for family functioning were computed. The 49 females from the adolescent sample had a mean score of 5.08 (SD = 1.57). The 54 males from the adolescent sample had a mean score of 4.85 (SD = 1.27). A t-test was conducted comparing the female and male subgroup scores within the sample. This analysis revealed no significant differences between female and male scores ($t = .833$, $p = .409$).

As can be seen in Table 11 the level of family functioning is positively correlated with mother and father's authoritative parenting style ($r = .287$, $p = .004$, $n = 99$; $r = .309$, $p = .006$, $n = 78$) and mother's authoritarian parenting style ($r = .230$, $p = .022$, $n = 99$). Additionally, it is noteworthy that 59% of families, as reported by the first-time offending adolescents, characterized their families as midrange or lower on the SFI,

where “midrange” has been defined by Beavers as families who “often have children either with behavior disorders or with neurotic offspring.”

Table 10. Sample Population’s Family Level of Functioning

Level of Functioning	Number	Cumulative f	Cumulative %
Optimal	2	2	1%
Adequate	40	42	41%
Midrange	44	86	84%
Borderline	16	102	99%
Severely Dysfunctional	1	103	100%

Age of Adolescent

The adolescent’s age, school grade, gender, and ethnic identity were determined by data provided by the parent by means of a demographic questionnaire created specifically for this study. The adolescent’s age was incorporated into the analysis as an independent, continuous variable. The ages of the sample participants ranged from 13 to 18. Four adolescents were age 13 (3.9%). Seventeen adolescents were age 14 (16.5% of the total sample). Twenty adolescents were age 15 (19.4% of the total sample). Twenty-seven adolescents were age 16 (26.2% of the total sample). Thirty-two adolescents were age 17 (31.1% of the total sample). Three adolescents were age 18 (2.9% of the total sample). Table 12 depicts this information for gender and age. The majority of the adolescent sample (60.2%) were above age 15 ($n = 62$). When grouped by age the adolescent participants had a mean age of 15.73 ($SD = 1.25$).

Gender of Adolescent

The gender of the adolescent was determined from the demographic questionnaire and incorporated into the analysis as an independent, categorical variable. There were 54 male adolescent participants composing 52.4% of the total sample. There were 49 female adolescent participants composing 47.6% of the total sample.

Table 11. Master Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Adolescent's Moral Reasoning	X									
2. Father's Moral Reasoning	.173	X								
3. Mother's Moral Reasoning	.169	.299	X							
4. Family Functioning	-.177	-.123	-.110	X						
5. Mother's Authoritative Parenting	-.070	-.055	.012	.287**	X					
6. Mother's Authoritarian Parenting	-.179	-.329	-.133	.230*	.217*	X				
7. Mother's Permissive Parenting	-.007	-.119	-.014	.097	-.275*	-.266**	X			
8. Father's Authoritative Parenting	-.215	.065	.123	.309**	.411***	.243*	-.358**	X		
9. Father's Authoritarian Parenting	-.171	-.353	-.015	.134	.404***	.492**	-.096	.086	X	
10. Father's Permissive Parenting	.002	.012	-.114	.018	-.305**	-.075	.567***	-.118	-.350	X

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed)

Table 12. Sample Population by Gender and Age

Age	Male (f)	Female (f)	Cumulative f	Cumulative %
13	2	2	4	3.9
14	11	6	21	20.4
15	12	8	41	39.8
16	11	16	68	66
17	16	16	100	97.1
18	2	1	103	100
Total	54	49		

Mean scores in level of moral reasoning (i.e., DIT scores) were computed for males and females. The 49 females from the adolescent sample had a mean score of 18.24 ($SD = 3.79$). The 54 males from the adolescent sample had a mean score of 17.69 ($SD = 3.95$). A one-sample t-test was conducted comparing the subgroup scores with the high school norm group scores. This analysis revealed that each of the two sub-samples of males and females scored significantly below the norm for high school students ($p < .001$).

While females scored higher on moral reasoning than did males, an independent t-test, comparing the males and females in this study, failed to find a significant relationship between DIT scores and gender ($t = .733$, $p = .466$). These data suggest that first-time offending adolescents, irrespective of gender, demonstrate a lower level of moral development than adolescents of the same age in the general population.

Grade Level of Adolescent

The grade levels represented in the sample were as follows: 2 adolescents (age 14) were in 7th grade (1.9%); 8 adolescents were in 8th grade (7.8% of the total

sample); 1 adolescent was dual enrolled in 8th/9th grade (1% of the total sample); 23 adolescents were in 9th grade (22.3% of the total sample); 21 adolescents were in 10th grade (20.4% of the total sample); 21 adolescents were also in 11th grade (20.4% of the total sample); and 23 adolescents were in 12th grade (22.3% of the total sample). One adolescent had dropped out of high school and had earned a general education degree and was consequently shown as a senior in high school. Four adolescents were in their freshman year of college (3.9% of the total sample). When grouped by school grade, the adolescent participants had a mean grade of 10.32 with a standard deviation calculated at 1.45.

Ethnicity of Adolescent

Information about the adolescent's ethnicity was derived from the demographic questionnaire and incorporated into the post hoc analysis. Of the total sample, 75 parent participants (72.8% of the total sample) identified their family as white. Twenty-one parent participants (20.4% of the total sample) identified their family as black. The remainder of the parents identified their family as Hispanic ($n = 5$, 4.9% of the total sample) or other ($n = 2$, 1.9% of the total sample). Table 13 presents information about the gender and ethnic origin of the study sample.

Table 13. Sample Population by Gender and Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Male (f)	Female (f)	Cumulative f	Cumulative %
White	41	34	75	73
Black	11	10	21	93
Hispanic	1	4	5	98
Other	1	1	2	100
Total	54	49	103	

Mean scores in level of moral reasoning also were computed by ethnic group. The 75 whites from the sample had a mean score of 18.52 ($SD = 3.72$). The 28 non-whites (predominantly black) from the sample had a mean score of 16.43 ($SD = 3.90$). While whites scored higher than nonwhites, one-sample t-tests indicated that both the subgroup of whites ($t = 2.236, p = .028$) and the subgroup of non-whites ($t = 4.139, p = .000$) in this sample of adolescents scored significantly below the norm for high school students in the general population. These data suggest that first-time offending adolescents, irrespective of ethnicity, demonstrate lower levels of moral development than adolescents of the same age in the general population.

Family's Socio-Economic Status

The family's socio-economic status (SES) was calculated using the Hollingshead Two Factor Index of Social Position. Each family's socio-economic position was ordered based on information about the parent's educational, occupational, and marital status provided in the demographic questionnaire. Subsequently, families were categorized as lower class, lower middle class, middle class, upper middle class, and upper class, and placed on an ordinal scale of one to five. This score was incorporated into the analysis as one of the independent, continuous variables. The socio-economic status of the sample analyzed ranged from lower class to upper class, where a maximum possible score for SES was five and the minimum possible score was one. Of the total sample, 13 families (12.6%) were identified as lower class. Thirty-one families (30.1% of the total sample) were identified as lower middle class. Forty-three families (41.7% of the total sample) were identified as middle class. Fifteen families (14.6% of the total sample) were identified as upper middle class. Only one family (1% of the total sample) was identified upper class. The mean score for SES was calculated to be 2.6 with a standard deviation

of .92. The largest concentration of families clustered around middle class and lower middle class (71.8% of the total sample) with the modal score calculated as middle class.

Residential Setting

Of the total sample, 61 parent participants (59.2% of the total sample) identified their family as living in a suburban area. Twenty-two parent participants (21.4% of the total sample) identified their family as living in an urban setting. Twenty parent participants (19.4% of the total sample) identified their family as living in a rural setting. The sample incorporated 14 Florida counties as indicated in Table 14.

Table 14. Frequency Distribution of Families by County of Residence

County	Frequency	Cumulative f	Cumulative %
Orange	17	17	16.5
Volusia	17	34	33.0
Alachua	14	48	46.6
Palm Beach	14	62	60.2
Sarasota	9	71	68.9
Clay	7	78	75.7
Duval	7	85	82.5
Hernando	7	92	89.3
Osceola	4	96	93.2
Seminole	3	99	96.1
Lake	1	100	97.1
Manatee	1	101	98.1
Martin	1	102	99.0
Citrus	1	103	100

Regression Analysis Results

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess the relative contribution of the six variables in predicting an adolescent's level of moral reasoning. The results of the regression analysis revealed that none of the independent variables contributed

significantly to predicting the adolescent's level of moral reasoning. Results of this analysis appear in Table 15.

Table 15. Results of the Regression Analysis for Hypothesis Seven

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	86.914	8	10.864	.723	.671
Residual	1217.974	81	15.037		
Total	1304.889	89			

* $p < .05$

Predictor Variable	B	df	Standard Error of	Beta	t-value	p-value
			Estimate			
Mother's Level of Moral Reasoning	.116	1	.098	.134	1.188	.238
Mother's Permissive Parenting	-.039	1	.093	-.051	-.420	.676
Mother's Authoritarian Parenting	-.078	1	.080	-.120	-.973	.334
Mother's Authoritative Parenting	-.030	1	.082	-.043	-.366	.715
Level of Family Functioning	.299	1	.319	.110	.938	.351
Adolescent's Age	.014	1	.328	.005	.043	.966
Adolescent's Gender	-.165	1	.852	-.022	-.193	.847
Family's Socio-Economic Status	-.016	1	.481	-.004	-.033	.974

* $p < .05$

Hypothesis Testing

Seven hypotheses were evaluated to test the theoretical assumptions of this research effort. The results for each hypothesis are described in the following paragraphs and summarized in Table 16.

Hypothesis One stated there is no statistically significant association between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and the level of moral reasoning demonstrated by her/his parents. The Pearson, two-tail correlation analysis ($r = .169$, $p = .112$, $n = 90$) indicated that there is not sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a relationship between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and the level of moral reasoning of the parents.

Table 16. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Number	Hypothesis	Decision
Ho1	There is no statistically significant association between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and the level of moral reasoning demonstrated by her/his parents.	Fail to Reject
Ho2	There is no statistically significant association between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and the reported parenting style utilized by her/his parents.	Fail to Reject
Ho3	There is no statistically significant association between the level of moral reasoning demonstrated by the adolescent and the reported level of family functioning.	Fail to Reject
Ho4	There is no statistically significant association between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and her/his age.	Fail to Reject
Ho5	There is no statistically significant association between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and her/his gender.	Fail to Reject
Ho6	There is no statistically significant association between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and her/his family's socio-economic status.	Fail to Reject
Ho7	There is no statistically significant association between the adolescent's level of moral reasoning and the six independent variables in hypotheses one through six taken together.	Fail to Reject

Hypothesis Two stated there is no statistically significant association between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and the reported parenting style utilized by her/his parents. The Pearson, two-tail correlation analyses (permissive parenting, $r = -.007$, $p = .948$, $n = 99$; authoritarian parenting, $r = -.179$, $p = .076$, $n = 99$; authoritative parenting, $r = -.070$, $p = .489$, $n = 99$) indicated that there is not sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a relationship between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and the parenting style of the parents.

Hypothesis Three stated there is no statistically significant association between the level of moral reasoning demonstrated by the adolescent and the reported level of family functioning. The Pearson, two-tail correlation analysis ($r = -.177$, $p = .074$, $n = 103$) indicated that there is not sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a relationship between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and the reported level of family functioning.

Hypothesis Four stated there is no statistically significant association between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and her/his age. The Pearson, two-tail correlation analysis ($r = .060$, $p = .547$, $n = 103$) indicated that there is not sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a relationship between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and her/his age.

Hypothesis Five stated there is no statistically significant association between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and her/his gender. The Pearson, two-tail correlation analysis ($r = -.073$, $p = .466$, $n = 103$) indicated that there is not sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a relationship between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and her/his gender.

Hypothesis Six stated there is no statistically significant association between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and her/his family's socio-economic status. The Pearson, two-tail correlation analysis ($r = .058$, $p = .560$, $n = 103$) indicated that there is not sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a relationship between an adolescent's level of moral reasoning and her/his family's socio-economic status.

Hypothesis Seven stated there is no statistically significant association between the adolescent's level of moral reasoning and the combined contribution of the family and demographic variables (the parents' level of moral reasoning; the parents' reported

parenting style; the adolescent's age; the adolescent's gender; the family's socio-economic status; and the family's level of functioning). The results of the linear regression suggest that there are no significant relationships between the adolescent's moral reasoning and the predictor variables ($r^2 = .867$, $f = .723$, $p = .671$).

Summary

This chapter presented a discussion of the procedures for the data analysis and the results of this research. The outcome testing to accept or reject the study's seven null hypotheses was reported. Statistical evidence derived from the analysis of data did not support rejection of any of the study hypotheses.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to determine if there were certain characteristics and familial influences common to those adolescents who have participated in an act of first-offense juvenile delinquency. More specifically, this research sought to determine both the degree of relationship between the first-time offending adolescents' level of moral reasoning and the level of moral reasoning demonstrated by their parents. No existing theory has integrated juvenile delinquency, moral reasoning, and familial influences. Therefore, the theoretical foundation for this research is based upon traditional criminological approaches to juvenile delinquency, neo-Kohlbergian theories of moral reasoning, and mainstream family systems theories. These approaches and theories contend that those individuals who have acquired post-conventional moral reasoning skills are less likely to commit acts of juvenile delinquency. Furthermore, theorists frequently posit that an adolescent's moral reasoning level is linked to their parent's level of moral reasoning only when facilitated by certain parenting styles and levels of family functioning.

The research sample consisted of 103 high school-aged, first-time adolescent misdemeanor offenders (aged 13 through 17) involved in Florida's juvenile justice system and their parents. Complete data sets were collected from 103 participating adolescents. Ninety completed data sets were collected from the mothers of the adolescents. Only 28 fathers completed data for the study. Consequently, the study's

hypotheses were tested solely on the basis of the data collected from the adolescents' mothers.

The sample was drawn from 14 counties within the state of Florida and from a variety of different residential settings. Each adolescent completed the Defining Issues Test, the Beaver's Self-Report Family Inventory, and the Parental Authority Questionnaire. Parents completed the Defining Issues Test and a demographic questionnaire. Statistical analyses were conducted to assess the associations among adolescent's ability to exercise moral reasoning, their parent's ability to exercise moral reasoning, the degree of family functioning, the parent's parenting style, the adolescent's age and gender, and the family's socioeconomic position.

This study was undertaken in an attempt to identify salient characteristics of first-time adolescent offenders who might participate in adolescent crime prevention and intervention/diversion programs tailored specifically to their needs. Further, this research was designed to assist in future efforts to differentiate between adolescents with chronic delinquent behaviors and those adolescents unlikely to commit future acts of delinquency.

Comparison of Sample with Norm Groups

The parents and the adolescents composing this sample differed significantly from general norm groups on several of the predictor variables.

Level of Moral Reasoning

Adolescents. The results of this study support findings made by prior researchers regarding moral reasoning. Specifically, this population of first-time offending adolescents demonstrated a significantly lower level of moral reasoning as compared with adolescents of the same age in a general norm group. Further, when split by gender,

females from the sample scored higher on moral reasoning than did males from the sample, but both groups still scored significantly lower than the norm group. When split by ethnicity (white and non-white) whites scored higher than non-whites, but both the subgroup of whites and non-whites scored significantly below the norm for senior high school students. These data suggest that first-time offending adolescents, irrespective of gender or ethnicity, demonstrate a lower level of moral development than adolescents of the same age in the general population.

Parents. The results of this study provide valuable information about the parents of first-time offending adolescents. Specifically, when the parents of first-time offending adolescents were compared against published norms for senior high school students in the norm group, there was no significant difference in the scores. However, when compared against the norm group of college students, the parents from the sample scored significantly lower than the norm group. This indicates that the moral reasoning of parents of first-time offending adolescents is similar to that of high school students in the general population.

Level of Family Functioning

While a comparison to a norm group would not be applicable with this variable, it is noteworthy that 59% of families were defined as midrange or lower on the SFI, where "midrange" has been characterized by Beavers (1990) as families with children demonstrating "behavior disorders" and "often neurotic offspring." Further, in midrange families the concept of "love" is one and the same with "controlling" and the ability to subtly shift parenting styles to match normal family development is lacking.

Beavers described two specific styles of functioning within families that he defined as centripetal and centrifugal. These styles are often taken to the extreme in the

case of midrange or severely extremely dysfunctional families. Members of centripetal families view the familial as a source of pleasure, joy, and satisfaction, regardless of whether these emotions are actually facilitated by the family or not. When the style is taken to the extreme, clinical descriptors used to describe individuals in these types of families would include the terms enmeshment and undifferentiated. Parents who practice an intense centripetal style run the risk of instilling excessive "breakaway guilt" in their children and inhibiting their self-determination. Conversely, members of centrifugal families look outside the family in search of pleasure, joy, and satisfaction. When the style is taken to the extreme, the centrifugal style family may have individuals within the family clinically described as disengaged or neglected. Parents that practice an intense centrifugal style run the risk of pushing their children into a premature, unprepared autonomy. Fifty-nine percent of this study's sample of first-time offending adolescents fall into one of these two categories.

Specific to enhancing the development of moral reasoning when either family style employed is at the extreme end of the continuum, the adolescent is less likely to develop beyond an egocentric point of view. Walker (1999) concluded that in dysfunctional families moral reasoning and moral behavior by necessity are focused upon the self. Braithwaite (1989) emphasizes that if the adolescent is either constantly fearful and insecure or neglected and insecure in their relationship with their parents, success in establishing corrective behaviors is unlikely. Rather, the adolescent's moral reasoning is focused upon avoiding punishment and the superior power of authorities - obedience for its' own sake.

Age, Gender, Socio-Economic Status, and Residential Setting

The results of this study provide a very general description of the typical first-time offending adolescent. Similar to the picture painted by the State of Florida's Department of Juvenile Justice, the study's cohort is roughly the same age (almost 16 years old), male, and white. However, this description of the study's cohort varies, in degree, from the information produced by the State of Florida. Specifically, the study's cohort consists of a slightly larger percentage of whites and a slightly smaller percentage of males. Additionally, while the study's cohort was drawn from varied socio-economic stations and residential settings, the sample's typical family would be described as suburban and middle class.

Associations Among Predictor Variables

While the results of this study found no significant associations between the level of adolescent moral reasoning and each of the predictor variables, there were significant associations among predictor variables.

Moral Reasoning and Parenting Style

It should be noted that the lack of significant associations between parent moral reasoning and adolescent moral reasoning is congruent with claims made by prior researchers. In three separate empirical studies on nonoffending adolescents, Powers (1982), Dunton (1989), and Walker and Taylor (1991) explored the associations between adolescent and parent moral reasoning levels. Each researcher reported similar findings that there were no significant associations between the parent's level of moral reasoning and that of the adolescent's. However, while the parent's level of moral reasoning, by itself, was not a predictor of an adolescent's level of moral reasoning, the parent's level of moral reasoning in conjunction with an authoritative parenting style was found to be

significant predictors of the adolescent's level of moral reasoning. The results of the current study are not consistent with these findings. In this study an authoritative parenting style did not constitute a mediating, or facilitating, variable linking parent moral reasoning and adolescent moral reasoning. This finding contradicts both the results of the aforementioned studies and the assumptions of many moral developmental theorists (Damon, 1988, 1995; Henggeler, 1989; Smetana, 1999; Walker & Hennig, 1999) and criminologists (Akers, 1994; Braithwaite, 1989; Hirschi, 1969).

Whether the absence of an association in this study results from an error in the thinking of the field's theorists, is a peculiarity of this subgroup of adolescents, or is a flaw in the research methodology is a question that can only be answered by further research. Prior research findings did not examine adolescent offenders' perceptions of parenting styles.

Parenting Style and Family Functioning

While no significant associations were found between the adolescent's level of moral reasoning and the level of family functioning or parenting style, both mother and father's authoritative parenting styles were significantly and positively correlated with enhanced family functioning. This finding is consistent with the existing literature. This study also found an association between mother's authoritarian parenting style and family functioning.

Results of this study revealed that adolescents' reports of permissive and authoritarian parenting styles in mothers and fathers were significantly and negatively correlated. Furthermore, mother's permissive parenting style was negatively correlated with mother's authoritative parenting style. Permissive and authoritarian parenting styles are defined by theorists as at opposite ends of a continuum. Therefore, the findings in this

study regarding parenting styles in particular are, with some reservations, supported by the existing literature. Such reservations center on the possibility that mother's authoritative and authoritarian parenting style, as measured by the PAQ in this study, may inadvertently share elements of the same construct. For example, mother's permissive parenting style was negatively correlated with mother's authoritarian parenting style (as expected) but was also negatively correlated with mother's authoritative parenting style (an unexpected finding). Further, the level of family functioning was associated with mother's authoritative parenting style (as expected) but was also associated with mother's authoritarian parenting style (an unexpected finding).

Limitations

Although the findings of this study provide significant information that supports and challenges prior theories and research outcomes, the results and implications drawn from this study must be assessed within the context of the study's possible limitations. Such limitations would include possible response biases, developmental issues, comprehension issues, conceptual issues concerning the study's methodology, instrument validity, and the generalizability of the study sample to the population.

While a staff person was available to the parents during the entire administration of the assessment instruments and while a staff member actively assisted the adolescents, self-report measurements are always vulnerable to response biases. Respondents may be dishonest with their answers and/or "Christmas Tree" their responses for a number of reasons, including passive-aggressive behavior or as a reaction to episodic events (Patterson & Chamberlain, 1988). This concern may be particularly true given the environment and circumstances surrounding the collection of data for this study. Data were collected within either a law enforcement or courtroom environment, and from

adolescents charged with a criminal offense. Social desirability may have unduly influenced the respondent's completion of the self-report instruments. Furthermore, respondents may have taken this opportunity to participate in passive-aggressive behavior during the administration of the assessment instruments.

Developmental issues may not have been adequately taken into consideration. In fact, most of the salient predictors of delinquency change at different developmental stages and interact in complex ways (Kumpfer, 1994). For example, over time, adolescents typically become increasingly exposed to, and subsequently influenced by, peer groups rather than caregivers. In turn, parenting intentions concerning punishment, independence and other constructs are moderated by the developmental level of the adolescent and ever-changing family dynamics (e.g., birth of additional children, a family member's death or chronic illness, etc.). Competent families are able to accomplish subtle shifts in style during the course of typical developmental progressions. However, less competent families tend to maintain a rigid perspective and become stuck with one style resulting in diminished family competence (Beavers, 1990). Case in point, it is common for family therapists to cite the caregiver's inability to adapt to their children's developmental growth as a focal point in treatment. Specific to this study, one could speculate that parents who have difficulty effectively adapting to their adolescent's developmental growth would be perceived by the adolescent as authoritarian rather than authoritative, until such time as the parents adapt. Furthermore, parents preoccupied with a stressful but temporary change in family dynamics may, in turn, temporarily change their parenting style. In short, the one-time use of self-report instruments with adolescents may have resulted in an atypical "snapshot" of the family during a transition between developmental stages rather than the more stable family picture afforded after

having adjusted to this new developmental stage (Holden & Edwards, 1989). One could further argue that the adolescent's first-time offending status would in itself constitute a stressful change in the family dynamics and a subsequent, possibly reactive (atypical) change in both parenting style and family functioning.

A second developmental issue centers on the adolescent's cognitive skills and their ability to comprehend the construct being assessed. In particular, as the assessor of parenting style and family functioning, the adolescent is asked to transcend the egocentric nature that marks her or his developmental stage. If, in fact, the adolescent failed to meet this requirement of relative objectivity it would account for problems measuring constructs such as parenting style, which requires a certain social intelligence and a mastery of formal operational thought. Furthermore, to successfully complete the DIT instrument requires that the respondent have both a mastery of abstract reasoning skills and the ability to simultaneously evaluate varying and complex concepts. Particularly with younger adolescents, such cognitive skills may not have yet been mastered.

There are a number of conceptual issues concerning the study's methodology that may introduce limitations to the study. For example, this study may be limited by its mono-perspective formatting. The construct of family functioning and parenting style was reported exclusively from the perspective of the first-time offending adolescent, and self-report instruments were the exclusive means of assessment.

While an effort was made to identify the two most significant caregivers (typically parents), it must be presumed that a number of other individuals, not incorporated into the study, have influenced the adolescent's moral development. Further, this study did not attempt to determine the length of time that the adolescents

were exposed to these caregivers. In turn, while an effort was made to quantify the characteristic theoretically associated with moral reasoning, this study did not attempt to quantify the characteristic theoretically associated with delinquency.

In addition to particular individuals, a number of events are associated with delinquency. Had this study incorporated these more salient events into the study they would have provided the context needed to further differentiate the sample under investigation. For example, had the study incorporated the Orange County, California, Probation Department's Assessment Factors the sample could have been differentiated between acute and chronic offenders.

A number of limitations may reside in the instruments themselves. Foremost, while initially considered to possess sufficient levels of validity and reliability, they may not be applicable when considering the unique population of juvenile offenders. While the DIT and SFI have been previously used to assess delinquency, these instruments and the PAQ fail to provide normative data about adolescent offenders in their testing manuals. Consequently, this population may need its own reliability measure, item response study, and construct validity assessment. For example, the adolescent's ability to make judgments regarding social interactions is presumed present when we ask the adolescent to provide an accurate assessment of her or his family's level of functioning. However, effectively judging social interactions may be a skill that is not necessarily present in adolescent offenders. Clinical observations may be a more effective means of assessing these constructs within juvenile offender populations.

There are additional concerns regarding the format of the DIT. First are concerns related to whether the verbiage in the questions is too dated (e.g., references are made to the Vietnam War and to mimeograph machines). Second, some of the questions seem

insultingly silly and senseless (e.g., “Whether Heinz is a professional wrestler, or had considerable influence with professional wrestlers.” “Whether the essence of living is more encompassing than the termination of dying, socially and individually”). Third, the process of completing the instrument is unnecessarily complex.

There are also additional concerns regarding the format of the PAQ. These concerns center on whether authoritative and authoritarian parenting style questions inadvertently share elements of the same construct within the instrument. A second concern centers on the instrument’s failure to specifically categorize the respondent’s parents within one of three given parenting styles (permissive, authoritative, or authoritarian). Rather, the instrument provides separate gross subscale scores for each of the three styles. As a consequence, unless the investigator develops their own scaling or ratio system, reported scores are difficult to apply statistically. For example, respondent A may score their mother permissive = 33, authoritative = 21, and authoritarian = 22 while respondent B may score their mother permissive = 16, authoritative = 12, and authoritarian = 11. The investigator is left unaided in their determination as to whether respondent A’s mother should be considered twice as permissive as respondents B’s mother or as permissive in relation to the mother’s respective scores for authoritative and authoritarian parenting.

The last limitation concerns the extent to which the study’s sample can be viewed as representative of the population of interest in the study. A primary concern centers on how the concept of first offender is defined. Some juveniles are caught on their first attempt at delinquency, while others may not be caught until after they have committed a substantial number of delinquent acts. No effort is made in this study to differentiate between these two groups. Rather, it is assumed that the ratio of first-attempt delinquents

in comparison to multi-attempt/first time caught delinquents within this study is consistent with the first-time adolescent offender population.

A number of concerns regarding generalizability of the study center on simple demographics. First, restricting the adolescents participating in this study to those above age 11 at the time of the delinquent act may have upwardly biased the sampling of the population, given that the average age at first offense is 14.4 years of age. Second, while individuals from 14 counties from a cross section of the counties in the State of Florida were included in the sample, concerns over generalizing beyond the State of Florida are legitimate. Juvenile justice practices vary on a state by state bases. Third, since the sample was characterized by the demographic methods employed by the State of Florida, which delineates only among White, Black, and Hispanic juveniles, generalization was limited to these ethnic group definitions. Finally, the majority of this study's adolescent sample (approximately 60%) came from suburban, lower middle - middle class, white families all of whom volunteered in their participation.

Implications

The results of the study provided insufficient evidence to reject any of the stated null hypotheses. Therefore, the value of these instruments to serve as a test battery to assist in predicting levels of moral reasoning, within adolescent first-time offender populations, is extremely limited. Conversely, the results of this study can contribute to eliminating certain variables, and combinations (interactions) thereof, as predictors of moral reasoning within the studied population. Specifically, this study revealed that within the first-time adolescent offender population, parent's level of moral reasoning, parent's parenting style, level of family functioning, adolescent's age, adolescent's

gender, family's socio-economic status, and the adolescent's grade in school may not be accurate predictors of adolescent moral reasoning.

Previous research illustrated the absence of any consistent correlation between the moral reasoning level of the adolescent and parents' level of moral reasoning. This study serves to confirm these research outcomes in the general sense while incorporating first-time adolescent offenders as a new subgroup. On the other hand, since involvement in the juvenile justice system can be taken as a failure of moral reasoning, the lack of a significant correlation may be due to a restriction of range.

This study may also serve as a step toward refuting certain theories attributed to adolescent moral reasoning as it pertains to parenting style. The vast majority of theorists presume that the parents' style of parenting, in conjunction with the parents' level of moral reasoning, may be the relevant variable necessary to predict the adolescent's level of moral reasoning. At least with respect to this sample of first-time adolescent offenders, the results of this study provide no corroboration of this assumptions.

Nevertheless, the results of this study add to a very limited body of knowledge concerning the moral reasoning of first-time adolescent offenders. These results serve to confirm our assumption that adolescent offenders have lower levels of moral reasoning than the general adolescent population. We can also state that this conclusion holds true regardless of the first-time adolescent offender's gender or ethnicity. In that this study's sample of adolescents had lower levels of moral reasoning than the general adolescent population, we may now begin to presume that first-time adolescent offenders conform to a greater extent to the larger multiple offending adolescent population than the general population of adolescents. Again, these associations are true regardless of the adolescent's gender or ethnicity.

Of particular value toward our better understanding of first-time adolescent offenders, is the new information we have acquired about their parents. This is the first study that attempts to evaluate the degree of moral reasoning within this particular parent population. Toward this end, the data indicate that the typical parent of an adolescent first-time offender has a lower level of moral reasoning than the typical college student and a moral reasoning level no more advanced than the typical high school student. Further, it should be noted that the first-time adolescent offender's typical perception of her or his family is one of dysfunction. This information is of particular value for those clinicians responsible for the development of parenting class curriculum and for family therapists attempting to tailor interventions. Clinicians and theorists should pay particular attention to this study's determination that the adolescents who report that their parents practice an authoritative parenting style are also significantly likely to report higher family functioning.

Recommendations for Future Research

The merits of refining juvenile delinquency prevention/diversion programs, clinical interventions, and predictor assessment instruments warrants continued research pertinent to the concepts addressed in this study. This is particularly true when one considers how few empirical studies have been conducted and particularly true with regards to adolescent offender populations. However, if one uses this study as a model, a number of methodological changes must first transpire. Foremost, in an effort to compensate for the inherent difficulties associated with the DIT and, to a lesser extent, the PAQ self-report instruments, this study should only be replicated using different instruments or procedures based either on direct clinical observations or different conceptual designs. Toward this end, it is important to note that a revised edition of the

DIT is currently in the norming process and should be available to future researchers. Further, such a replication should also incorporate an effort to determine the length of time that each adolescent is exposed to both primary caregivers. A second line of research should be devoted toward improving the instruments used to evaluate moral reasoning and parenting styles.

In addition, future studies should seek to determine the significant relationships between moral reasoning and the other characteristics and events associated with delinquency problems (e.g., illness, substance abuse, recent trauma, major financial problems, marital discord, documented child abuse or neglect, etc.). Specifically, future research should seek to determine the strength of the relationships between the adolescent's level of moral reasoning and the variables currently used in delinquency assessment instruments. Along this line of reasoning, efforts should be made to expand upon our understanding of the relationships determined in this study to be pertinent to parenting style and family functioning.

While current research is far more cognizant of the need to address gender issues, a debate still lingers over the merits of macro verses micro interpretations of morality and the effects that gender play on these interpretations. In fact, this study's sample was not necessarily representative of all first-time offenders. Future research should incorporate a larger, more representative sample. Specifically, future research should have an increase in the representation of fathers, both those present in and absent from their adolescent children's lives. Efforts to determine the effects on the adolescent's moral reasoning in relationship to father's presence within the family unit holds particular merit as a subject for future research. In turn, efforts should be made to insure that African-American populations, Hispanic/Latino-American, urban, and lower SES populations are adequately represented.

APPENDIX
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

County: _____ Participant code: _____

1. Residential description (circle one): urban, suburban, rural

2. Teenager's age: _____

3. Teenager's gender (circle one): male female

4. Teenager's school grade: _____

5. Teenager's ethnic identity:

Black: _____ White: _____ Hispanic: _____ Other: _____

6. Adult family members **in the home** of the teenager (no names, check all that apply):

mother: _____ father: _____ step-mother: _____ step-father: _____ step-mother: _____

grand-mother (mother's): _____ grand-father (mother's): _____

grand-mother (father's): _____ grand-father (father's): _____

mother's boyfriend: _____ father's girlfriend: _____

other caregiver(s) (aunt, uncle, etc.): _____

7. Adult family members **not in home** of the teenager but provide significant care, support, or guidance (no names, check all that apply):

mother: _____ father: _____ step-mother: _____ step-father: _____ step-mother: _____

grand-mother (mother's): _____ grand-father (mother's): _____

grand-mother (father's): _____ grand-father (father's): _____

mother's boyfriend: _____ father's girlfriend: _____

other caregiver(s) (aunt, uncle, etc.): _____

8. From the adults checked in question 6 and/or 7, circle the two adults that spend the most time living with (or in the home of) the teenager.
9. The level of education, occupation, and relationship to the teenager, of the two parent(s)/caregiver(s) circled in question 8.

parent(s)/caregiver(s): #1

level of education: _____

occupation: _____

relationship to teenager:

parent(s)/caregiver(s): #2

level of education: _____

occupation: _____

relationship to teenager: _____

10. Number of children living in the home and their ages: _____

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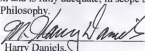
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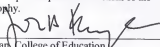

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